

PSYCHD

"They're only as real as the intent of the people that are in them"

Foucauldian narrative analysis of the discursive complexities of familial estrangement

Vaughan, Tamara

Award date:
2018

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

***“They’re only as real as the intent of the people that are in them”*: A
Foucauldian narrative analysis of the discursive complexities of familial
estrangement.**

by

Tamara S. Vaughan, BSc

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
PsychD in Counselling Psychology

Department of Psychology

University of Roehampton
2017

Abstract

Family estrangement is of emergent research interest in psychology and counselling, however, the power laden ways in which the family has been conceptualised historically has made familial estrangement, generally, a marginalised discursive site. Adopting a post-structuralist epistemology, this research explores how the objectification of the family, provides a means through which familial estrangement can be situated and understood. Moreover, its aim is to investigate how language, specifically, is used to construct this psychological experience.

Individual interviews were conducted with eleven participants who were asked to speak directly about their experiences of estrangement from members of their nuclear families. A Foucauldian narrative analysis was then conducted which highlighted the discursive power relations in participants' accounts. The results suggest also that familial estrangement can be multiply constructed and understood from the protagonist positions of estranger (one who 'leaves' the family), estrangee (one who is 'left') or an evacuated critical position which problematises the concreteness of these binaries. These diversely constructed accounts appear to position those involved in distinct sets of discursive relations of empowerment or enfeeblement and in so doing, highlight the inherent power in talk and the ways in which individuals might unwittingly become located within their accounts.

These findings are discussed in relation to the topics of the family and family estrangement and in relation to their implication on clinical practice. Additionally, the method and means through which this topic was investigated is critiqued.

Overall, it is argued that this research should raise the awareness of counselling psychologists and other therapeutic practitioners, by demonstrating the normative social regulatory power exhibited by the family over individuals and thereby

highlighting the complexities of family membership and the experience of familial estrangement. Moreover, it seeks to illustrate how this power can be critiqued and unsettled.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	8
List of transcription conventions and definition	9
List of tables	10

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Familial estrangement and counselling psychology

1.1: Introduction To Chapter One	11-12
1.2: Family Estrangement And The Rationale For This Study	12-15
1.3: Family Estrangement And Counselling Psychology	15-20
1.4: Post-Structuralism And This Proposed Research	20-21
1.5: A Turn To Language: Narrative Theory, Discourse, Power and Action	22-26
1.6: Post-Structuralism, Narratives and Family Estrangement in Counselling Psychology	27-28

CHAPTER TWO

A Genealogy of Family Estrangement and the Family

2.1: Introduction to Chapter Two	29-30
2.2: Pre-Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement	30-31
2.2.1: The Family in Antiquity	31-34
2.2.2: The Family in The Christian West of The Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age	34-37
2.2.3: The Family in the Enlightenment Era	38-40
2.3: Summary of Pre-Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement	40
2.4: Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement	41-42
2.4.1: Sociological Observations on the Family and Family Estrangement	42-43
2.4.1a: <i>The Structural Family</i>	43-45
2.4.1b: <i>The Functional Family</i>	46-47

2.4.1c: <i>The Transactional Family</i>	47-49
2.4.2: The Family and Identity Theory	50-51
2.4.3: The Family in Traditional Psychoanalysis	51-53
2.4.4: The Family in Object Relations and Humanistic Theories and Therapy	53-55
2.4.5: The Family in Systemic Theory	56-59
2.5: Summary of Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement	59-60
2.6: Concluding Remarks	60-61

CHAPTER THREE

Method and Methodology

3.1: Introduction to Chapter Three	62
3.2: Post-Structuralist Epistemology and Foucauldian Narrative Analysis	63
3.2.1: Narrative Theory and Analysis	64-65
3.2.2: Foucauldian narrative analysis	65-67
3.3: Design of proposed study	67-68
3.3.1: Ethics	68-71
3.3.2: Participants	71-72
3.3.3: Pilot Study and Final Interview Schedule	73-75
3.4: Analysis and Analytic Steps	75
3.4.1: FNA	75-76
3.4.2: Foucauldian Discourse Analytic Steps	76-78
3.5: Researcher's Reflexivity	78-81
3.6: Criteria for quality in qualitative research	81-82

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

4.1: Introduction to Chapter Four	83-85
4.2: Familial Estrangers' Narrative trajectory	85
4.2.1: Subject Position (1) of Estrangers: Stuck in the family, powerless and unsafe	85-88

4.2.2: Subject Position (2) of Estrangers: Accessed agency: “biting back”	88-92
4.2.3: Subject Position (3) of Estrangers: Separated from the family and accepting the loss	92-96
4.3: Familial Estrangees’ Narrative Trajectories	97
4.3.1: Subject Position (1) of Estrangees: The Family Keeper	97-99
4.3.2: Subject Position (2) of Estrangees: Abandoned by the family	99-102
4.3.3: Subject Position (3) of Estrangees: Realising the family myth yet grieving the family lost	103-6
4.4: Questioning the binaries	106-7
4.4.1: Subject position (1) of Questioning the Binaries: Ambiguous families: questioning the normality of the family	107-9
4.4.2: Subject Position (2) of Questioning the Binaries: Abandoned and abandoning	110-12
4.4.3: Subject Position (3) of Questioning the Binaries: What is a family, anyway?	113-18
4.5: Summary of Results and Concluding Remarks	118-20

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

5.1: Introduction to Chapter Five	121-2
5.2: The Research Findings and their Possible Contributions to Counselling Psychology	122-3
5.2.1: The narrative trajectories	123-4
5.2.2: The subject positions	125-6
5.2.3: Impact on literatures on the family and family estrangement	126-8
5.2.4 Implications on Counselling Psychology Practice	128-130
5.3: Evaluation of this research	130-1
5.3.1: An evaluation of Foucauldian narrative analysis	131-4
5.3.2: A critique of opportunity sampling	134-6
5.3.3: Researcher reflexivity revisited	136-9

5.4: Considerations for future research	139-
	141
5.5: Overall Conclusions	141
References	142
Appendices	165

Acknowledgments

To my Director of Studies, Dr Paul Dickerson and my supervisor, Dr Jean O'Callaghan, thank you for encouraging me to think creatively and critically and for emboldening me not to lose sight of my own power. Your guidance, knowledge, enthusiasm and boundless dedication have made this project possible and for that and more, I am ever grateful.

To Dr Jason Robinson, Ms Becca Bland and Stand Alone, thank you for your support, especially at the earliest of stages.

To the participants who gave of your time and shared your experiences so openly and freely. You have invaluable contributed to this project and the field of counselling psychology but also to me, personally. I cannot adequately articulate how appreciative I am of this.

A special mention must go, too, to Dr Steve Wharton (formerly of University of Sussex). At a critical stage of my academic career, you made me believe that a doctorate was achievable – I have not forgotten this.

To my friends, colleagues and peers who made this journey not only possible, but enjoyable and for picking me up every time I wanted to stay down - thank you.

Finally, to my own family, your support in many more ways than one, has made this all possible. Thank you for fostering my curiosity and for always allowing me the personal and intellectual freedoms to be critical of anything – including family.

Transcription notation conventions

(...) indicates where material from the original source has been omitted

.... Indicates where there has been an omission between two sentences

[text] within quotation, indicates where additional information or an explanation has been provided by someone other than the author/speaker

American Psychological Association (APA, 2010)

List of Tables

Table 1	Demographics details of participants and their estrangements -	72
Table 2	Narrative trajectories and their constitutive subject positions -	84

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction: Family estrangement and counselling psychology

“The family, like the prison and the asylum, does not exist because it needs to or because we have become so enlightened as to realise that it is the ‘best’ way to deal with certain facts about human nature. Rather, it exists as it does as the result of power struggles in which certain people lost and whose histories of resistance have been forgotten.”

Foucault on the family in Taylor, 2012, p. 215

1.1: Introduction To Chapter One

This research is about the constructive and deconstructive nature and power of discourse. Specifically, it focuses on the discursive power laden ways in which individuals construct personal accounts of “familial estrangement” and in so doing, offers a critical understanding of the mutability of the family. To enable this focus, I adopted a post-structuralist epistemology to address the question: *how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?*

Eleven individuals were interviewed about their personal experiences of estrangement from at least one member of their nuclear family. The interview transcripts were analysed using a Foucauldian narrative analysis (FNA), informed by Foucault’s ideas on discursive power in order to highlight some of the ways in which individual constructions of familial estrangement may also reflect wider social regulatory practices in western culture. This research therefore aims to contribute to the empirical literature on “family estrangement”. Importantly, it will critique some of the diverse and nuanced ways in which experiences of familial estrangement may be

constructed, which may be of use to therapeutic practitioners such as Counselling Psychologists (CoPs) when working with individuals experiencing family estrangement.

In this chapter, I will offer a rationale for this research by firstly defining family estrangement and summarising how it is currently understood in psychological and therapeutic literatures. Secondly, I will argue that family estrangement is a little understood subject in need of research, critical reflection and discourse amongst CoPs. I will then present a case for employing a post-structuralist approach in counselling psychology research whilst also introducing the discursive narrative focus on language which has been adopted.

1.2: Family Estrangement and The Rationale For This Study

The word “estrangement” is said to have its origins in the Middle French word “estranger” and the Latin words “extrāneāre” and “extrāneus”, respectively meaning, to treat as a stranger and foreign (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.). In considering family estrangement we can translate this into meaning, to treat individuals within the family as strangers, to treat members of the family as foreign. More officially, in contemporary literature, family estrangement can be defined as “*the distancing and loss of affection between family members*” (Agllias, 2011, p. 107). Whilst this definition is inclusive of estrangements which occur between an individual and at least one member of their family (i.e. not the entire family), the researcher proposes that the term family estrangement may misrepresent this inclusion and the term familial estrangement might be more fitting. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, family estrangement has been applied, to the broad topic and phenomenon whilst familial estrangement has been applied, more specifically, within the context of this study.

According to Agllias (2013; 2017), family estrangement can be “categorised” as being “physical”, where an individual ceases contact with one or more of their family members; or “emotional”, where relationships between family members lack warmth, intimacy or trust and where, although some contact is maintained, it is typically infrequent, uncomfortable and dissatisfying. Similarly, categories of intelligibility have been provided to identify the parties involved within an estrangement. An “estranger” can be understood as the person who chooses to dissolve a family relationship through physical or emotional withdrawal: an “estrangee” is someone who has been on the receiving end of this disownment: and finally, an “estranged person” can be more neutrally identified as someone who has limited to no emotional or physical interactions with one or more members of their family, regardless of how this came about (Agllias, 2017).

Although arguably useful distinctions, from a post-structuralist and Foucauldian stance (Foucault, 1982), such categorisations, rather than being a precise division within “reality”, should be seen as a “*mode of objectification*” (Dickerson, 2000, p. 382) and should, therefore, be applied tentatively. Moreover, Agllias (2017) posits that the boundaries which define the “categories” of estrangement are often blurred and many individuals alternate between them. Similarly, the dividing lines which define the parties involved are contestable and at times, ambiguous.

Considering the prevalence of estrangement in western culture, whilst there are no official statistics (LeBey, 2001), some organisations have sought to provide some quantifiable data. Stand Alone (2014) – one such organisation located within the United Kingdom – partnered with national marketing organisation, Ipsos MORI, to produce a survey whose data suggests that one in five people within the UK are affected by family estrangement in some way; and over five million people might

identify themselves as having been/being physically estranged from at least one immediate family member. LeBey (2001) has suggested that shock, anger and hurt, are foremost amongst the emotions immediately impacting the estranged individual (LeBey, 2001). Sichel (2004) similarly maintained that the aftermath of an estrangement is similar to that of the traumatic shock of being buried alive; whilst others have described estrangement as an ambiguous loss, creating in its ambiguity, a particularly complex process of grief (Agllias, 2013). Estrangement appears, according to Friesen (2003), to have a notable ripple impact not only on familial relationships but on other interpersonal ones.

Despite the perceived prevalence of estrangement, there remains a substantial dearth of empirical literature. And Agllias (2017) argues that despite being now increasingly recognised and utilised as a phenomenon and familiar term, family estrangement has often remained undefined by authors, making it an even more difficult experience to discuss. Yet evident from these limited discussions are the difficulties involved in an estrangement and its detrimental impact (LeBey, 2001; Sichel, 2004; Friesen, 2003; Agllias, 2013; 2017); while its positive impact is often, less broadly explored (Agllias, 2017). Crucially, it is possible that the construction of family estrangement as largely detrimental, has contributed to a singular inequitable perception of this phenomenon. This, along with the absence of a developed lexicon, may constrain thought and discussion about family estrangement among therapeutic practitioners.

It is important also to note that the constructions of estrangement are understood within the context of our extant understandings about the family. Whilst this will be explored in Chapter Two, it is acknowledged that in western culture there is a relatively uncontested idealistic grand narrative that the family is a naturally

affectionate, cohesive unit and “safe-haven” (Elliot, 1986; Davidoff, Doolittle, Fink & Holden, 1999; DePaulo & Morris, 2006; Kradin, 2009; Dallos & Draper, 2010) - one which should, therefore, be revered and protected. The notion of family estrangement interestingly challenges this construction of the family. The fact that it has been under-researched, may further evidence the family’s social regulatory power, including a silencing of the negative side of this revered social institution. Interestingly even the contemporary definition as offered by Agllias (2011) arguably also reifies this assumption of inherent unity and affection between family members prior to an estrangement; and demonstrates the complex power dynamic at play here. These observations in turn raise important questions about what is promoted as true and normal in the assumptions we unquestioningly hold socially and culturally about the family; and beg consideration of how CoPs understand and work with such normative “truth claims” about the family.

1.3: Family Estrangement and Counselling Psychology

In order to understand the relevance of family estrangement within counselling psychology, it is worth first examining some of the key influences within the profession.

Counselling psychology is a relatively new discipline within the United Kingdom (UK). Although recognised for a much longer period in the United States (US), here, counselling psychology began to emerge in the 1960s and was only recognised as a distinct division of the British Psychological Society (BPS) in 1994 (Woolfe, Dryden & Strawbridge, 2003). The BPS (2005) defines counselling psychology as “*a branch of professional psychological practice strongly influenced by human science research as well as the principle psychotherapeutic traditions*” (p.

1). Blair (2010) proposed that the profession is one which is “*situated at a busy junction of diverse and sometimes competing ideologies, frameworks and paradigms*” (p. 20). Whilst some praise this diversity and pluralistic approach (Cooper & McLeod, 2007), others have suggested that it has created a profession which is confused and confusing in a complexity that consists of many contradictions and ambiguities (Feltham, 2013). Importantly, others such as Risq (2006) and Woolfe (2012) have suggested that such contradictions create a tension in the identity of CoPs which trainees and qualified professionals alike may struggle to negotiate. Within this diversity however lies the CoPs’ strength in being able to understand clients’ processes and experiences from diverse perspectives and so, paradoxically, it is conceivable that this process of negotiating difficulties, contradictions and tensions within the counselling psychology profession, is one which aptly prepares the CoP for sensitive flexibility within the therapeutic encounter.

Importantly, at the heart of this diversity is counselling psychology’s historic distancing of itself from the medical model with which its predecessor, traditional psychoanalysis, was associated. It instead espouses the values of phenomenology, meaning-making and the therapeutic relationship (Risq, 2007). According to Woolfe, Strawbridge, Douglas and Dryden (2010), psychological treatment must be meaningful to the client and so, the CoP must draw on their various, and even at times, competing ideologies and frameworks and use them to facilitate a mutual understanding between their client and themselves, which is guided by their client’s frame of reference. This is particularly important as, according to Horton-Salway (2001), the way in which clients attribute meaning to their experiences is critical and may influence their clinical presentations. Estranged individuals, research has shown, often feel alienated from dominant socio-cultural family narratives (Daly, 2001;

Robinson, 2011) and so, the way in which they understand and attribute meaning to their familial experiences is pertinent and of importance to CoPs.

Moreover, while the family has been of significant interest to counselling and psychotherapy generally for providing developmental formative influences on the individual, with the exception of systemic family therapies, analyses of family dynamics have often been limited in order to narrow the focus and better understand the behavioural and relational patterns of an individual (Harkness, 2014). The family itself as a construct and as a unit, it appears, has thus often remained overlooked and under-critiqued (Bernardes, 1999). Additionally, as noted above, little empirical focus has been given to the experience of family estrangement (LeBey, 2001; Dattilio & Nichols, 2011; Agllias, 2013); and it has typically been conceptualised as an ubiquitous detrimental experience (LeBey, 2001). The consequence is that family estrangement has become marginalised within the field of counselling psychology. Despite this, however, the values of humanism, phenomenology and diversity (Cooper & McLeod, 2007; Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2010) upon which counselling psychology is founded, along with its commitment to empowerment and social justice (Packard, 2009; Young, 2013; Young, Bantjes & Kagee, 2016), position it aptly to work with an array of complex presenting issues, particularly those, like family estrangement, which have been marginalised within society and clinical work.

Here, it is also important to consider the professional contexts within which many CoPs work and how this may influence clinical practice. CoPs can be found in an array of settings including private practices, independent (non-public) sectors and the National Health Service (NHS). The latter remains the largest mental health care provider within the UK (Woolfe, 2016), resulting in it being one of the leading employers of CoPs and thus, significant in its influence (Vermes, 2016). The NHS

was founded upon the principle that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of financial means. In the 2000s, according to Feltham (2013), among the developments to have emerged were: counselling in the NHS, research, and the endorsement of evidence-based practice. House and Loewenthal (2008) have suggested that as a consequence, an emergent aim was to provide clinically efficacious and cost-effective practices, whose “effectiveness” could be tangibly assessed. And so developed a culture whereby individuals seeking treatment were assessed, and their treatment streamlined, based upon specific psychiatric and diagnostic criteria (Golsworthy, 2004; Larsson, Brooks & Loewenthal, 2012). CoPs employed by the NHS are then generally required to conform to this changing ethos; and although those outside of the NHS have arguably been less pressurised, Feltham (2013) suggests that they too have not entirely escaped this culture and its influence on clinical practice. Consequently, many CoPs face the ongoing difficult reality of continuously negotiating, in order to maintain their pluralistic and phenomenological philosophies, in the wake of a culture which places an emphasis, by contrast, on diagnostic labels and unitary clinical practice.

Particularly relevant here also, is *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) which remains one of the most influential and widely used diagnostic tools within the UK (Woolfe, 2016). In its latest publication (DSM-V), its section on “*Problems related to family upbringing*” (American Psychiatric Association- APA, 2013, p. 715) makes one brief reference to “*unwarranted feelings of estrangement*” (APA, 2013, p. 715). In light of the notable impact of family estrangement, it is possible that many individuals who have experienced this phenomenon will seek psychological support. However, as already stated, the under-representation of family estrangement within empirical literature and, as cited above,

in diagnostic manuals such as the DSM, means that no official model or theory exists presently to aid its clinical recognition, formal classification or treatment. Consequently, it is likely instead that many clients may present in clinical contexts with other mental health issues such as are related to mood, anxiety and self-esteem (Agllias, 2017). Crucially, as noted above, whilst family estrangement remains largely marginalised and stigmatised within socio-cultural discourse, it is highly conceivable that individuals who have experienced this may not be forthcoming in sharing their experiences, even within the clinical setting. This contention is supported by Dattilio and Nichols (2011) who suggested that, *“for every client who seeks help with an estrangement, there may be three or four cases in which a rift isn’t mentioned but nevertheless exerts a poisonous influence”* (p. 88). The probability, therefore exists that the CoP encountering a client experiencing family estrangement may either not recognise it, under-estimate its impact or feel/be significantly deskilled in facilitating this discussion. Moreover, as can perhaps be further evidenced by the DSM’s reference to feelings of estrangement as *“unwarranted”*, in the absence of substantial and informative empirical literature, clinical professionals may adopt an inadequate and unilaterally informed impression of family estrangement.

Family estrangement, though prevalent in both social and clinical contexts (LeBey, 2001; Dattilio & Nichols, 2011; Stand Alone, 2014) remains a scarcely researched topic. Moreover, as has been introduced within this chapter and will be argued throughout this thesis, the immensely power-laden grand narratives which circulate about the family within western culture and society, serve to marginalise alternative discourses (Foucault, 1989) such as that on family estrangement, rendering it an unspoken phenomenon (Butler, 2004). This lack of empirical literature and associated marginalisation, despite its prevalence, makes estrangement, according to

Willig (2001), the type of experience which requires further investigation and empirical focus. In summary then, the main reasons for conducting this research in relation to counselling psychology are as follows:-

- It is hoped that this study will contribute towards and provide meaningful analytic value for this subject.
- This research aims to be a resource for CoPs so that they might become aware of their own truth claims in relation to constructions of the family.
- It is hoped overall that in doing so, the marginalisation of and stigmatisation with which family estrangement is often received, even and especially, perhaps, within the clinical context, may be critically challenged.

The epistemological approach which most aptly lends itself to such aims is that of post-structuralism. This and its application to this particular study will be subsequently examined.

1.4: Post-Structuralism and This Proposed Research

Having advanced the suitability of post-structuralism, it is worth first exploring its history, in order to better understand how and why it can be applied to the issue of family estrangement.

The term post-structuralism denotes a collection of ideas which came into prominence in the 1960s and 70s as a critique of structuralism and the specified certainties of modernism. The post-Enlightenment and modernist positivism which had influenced the development of mainstream psychology (Parry & Doan, 1994; Burr, 2003), claimed that objective and universal reality could be established through empiricism and scientific method (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Structuralism and post-structuralism challenged such essentialisms, instead proposing that meaning and

understanding is generated by and mediated via language and representation. Thus, language constructs rather than reflects reality (Burr, 2003). From a post-structuralist perspective then, the search for a universal underlying truth is futile, and meaning, as with the language which constructs it, is therefore mutable, opaque, dynamic and dependent upon the power interests of the socio-historical contexts in which it is produced.

In adopting this ironic, questioning stance, the family can be understood as a socially produced “situated knowledge” (Haraway, 1992), that has been constructed through and maintained by dominant social, cultural and historical narratives (Agllias & Gray, 2013). This context dependent view of the family, makes it, like many social constructs, mutable in relation to social interests and priorities and yet, the commonly held view of the family as static and absolutely nurturing, makes it a powerful and problematic discursive concept. Within this dominant discourse, family estrangement as the evacuation of loyalty from this social institution seems to be popularly construed as bad and difficult to talk about. According to a post-structuralist perspective, examination of the role language plays in constructing realities and social processes, and their interactions, enables us to challenge conventions about the family and think of how it could be different (Burr, 2003; Agllias & Gray, 2013). Moreover, post-structuralism arguably provides psychological research with a critical way of exploring people’s personal identities and the ways in which they construct and reconstruct these through various social experiences (Potter, 1996; Burr, 2003). This research is therefore particularly interested in the discursive power relations found within narrative accounts of familial estrangement, what might be constructed within them as “true” and the power dynamics they might represent.

1.5: A Turn To Language: Narrative Theory, Discourse, Power and Action

Psychologists' interest in language has developed over a number of years (Willig, 2013). Specifically, language became understood as productive and as the means through which individuals could construct versions of their reality. Over time, numerous emergent methods have aimed to explore various aspects of discourse within psychology (Smith, 2015). Two such are narrative analysis and discourse analysis. Here, I will aim to provide an overview of each of these approaches and their application in this study.

The definition of narrative is disputable (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013); however, it mainly refers to a type of language which accounts for events and motives in time sequences that have a protagonist and a causal trajectory. Yet, authors have also refuted the notion that one succinct definition is necessary (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). Narrative theory posits that we are born into a storied world (Willig, 2013). In worlds that are ever changing, these stories, our stories, form our capacities to make sense of and bring order to the complexities of our lives. They are also a lens through which we understand change and disruptions to our everyday experiences (Herman, 2009; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013; Willig, 2013; Murray, 2015). Importantly, when individuals relay their narrative accounts, they are not relaying or remembering their experiences in their entirety but rather, are selective about what is included in that account (Burr, 2003). Stories thus are seen, as being crafted specifically around a theme or sentiment in a way which may or may not be of conscious doing by the narrator (Burr, 2003). According to Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013), there are a variety of ways in which narratives can be analysed; however, post-structuralist perspectives may be particularly interested in their

representations of power whilst also concentrating on narratives' multiplicities and contradictions.

Ricoeur (1988) suggested that narratives not only bring a sense of order and meaning to our everyday lives, but also provide structures to our sense of "self". From an essentialist perspective, identity has often been viewed as a relatively stable, fixed state of being (Burr, 2003). This belief is one which has been heavily influential in psychotherapeutic modalities and their search for a true, authentic self (Ellman, 2010; Douglas, Woolfe, Strawbridge, Kasket & Galbraith, 2016). By contrast, from a post-structuralist perspective, our identity is understood as a multiply and varying constructed entity. When we create a narrative, we are storying our lives not simply to others, but to ourselves; and in so doing, create a narrative identity which may change depending on the nature of the narrative and the context in which it is being produced (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Murray, 2015). Each narrative identity connects us to our social relationships and groups but also, according to Murray (2015) "*provides us with a sense of localized coherence and stability*" (p. 89). As we select particular aspects of our experiences to narrate, we connect them with other experiences thus attempting to bring some sense of order and connection to various events and to manage our identities in "*shifting, fragmented and complex ideological field(s)*" (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003, p. 492). Examining personal narratives on familial estrangement is expected, therefore, to provide invaluable insight into the specifics of change and continuity surrounding this experience.

Another empirical focus on language can be found in the analysis of discourse which, like narrative, can be multiply defined. For discourse analysts, it is largely understood as "*an instance of situated language*" (Burr, 2003, p. 64) which denotes a set of statements, meanings and representations which, when combined, can produce

a particular account or narrative of an event. Foucault understood discourse as *“practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak”* (Foucault, 1972, p. 100) and to which we can then become subject. He contributed extensively to ideas about discursive power and subjectivity (Foucault, 1982) and, specifically, how people come to see and know themselves in particular ways (McNay, 1994; Hook, 2007; Dickerson, 2012). Foucault (1989) also explored the ways in which discourses were socially produced and the process by which some are allowed to emerge as dominant, whilst others become marginalised, determining through that process, what can be said, when, by and to whom (Foucault, 1982; Parker, 1992). From this perspective, Link (1983) proposed that discourse can be defined as an *“institutionalised way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power”* (p. 60). Moreover, according to Foucault (1961), language outlines categorical distinctions and in so doing, it defines and reifies cultural norms and divides groups in power related truth claims that enable and prohibit particular forms of life.

Initially, Foucault (1961;1978) considered power to be negative and oppressive. In time however, he asserted that in order to understand the way in which power operates in modern society, we must also appreciate its productive effects (Foucault, 1979; Lacombe, 1996). Power, he concluded, is a relational entity defined through its *“constantly shifting states of disequilibrium”* (Thompson, 2003, p. 117). Thus, for Foucault (1982), power cannot be owned; rather, it is exercised in relations and interactions between people and groups. This is particularly important within narrative contexts as discourses themselves are relational (Davis, 1986) and thus serve to produce power through repeated co-constructions and co-regulatory ways of seeing, communicating and being. Moreover, according to Foucault (1989), this saturation of relational power within narratives means that their meanings and characters are

constantly destabilised.

These perspectives, should be of particular interest to CoPs given the importance and use of “the talking cure” (Ellenberger, 1970). Therefore, identifying distinct narratives about familial estrangement and their constituent discursive resources, is of particular relevance to this research.

Foucault’s views on power gradually began to move away from his earlier notions of judicial power (Foucault, 1961) in which social institutions and authorities were seen to render a domineering control over individuals. In time, he began instead to focus on exploring the subtleties of power. This was portrayed particularly in his examination of surveillance in prisons. Foucault theorised that panopticons, located in the centre of prisons, allowed prison guards to observe inmates at any time without their explicit knowledge. Because prisoners knew they may be observed at any moment, this in turn produced a vigilance amongst them, and they consequently learned to turn a disciplinary gaze upon themselves (Rose, 1996). Although this panopticon idea was not implemented in all prisons, it provided an intriguing and instructive insight into the mechanisms of disciplinary forces. From closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras monitoring public social behaviour, to the surveillance and governing of male and female sexuality, physicality and emotionality and including family practices, such surveillance techniques have become, according to Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2000), a fundamental part of modern life in western societies. This is critical in the understanding and study of the family and, specifically, of the marginalisation of family estrangement. Exploring the narrative constructions and discursive practices of personal experiences of familial estrangement may thus further unearth these surveillance practices and methods of control.

Foucault’s theories on power were later expanded to examine the ways in

which people adopt “systems of truth” to guide their conduct. To Foucault, “*power operates not by force, but by knowledges that are to be implemented by the self, on the self...to produce truth of the self*” (as quoted in Frank, 1998, p. 335). Thus, similar to narrative identity, Foucault (1980) contested the idea of a unified self or singular, stable identity. On this, he posited that our identities are positioned and repositioned through talk and through an array of, at times conflicting, subject-positions.

FNA, as employed in this study therefore contends that narratives, according to Tamboukou (2013) contain a two-fold function, of exposing:

- i) Technologies of power which “*determine the conduct of the individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject*” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18) and,
- ii) Technologies of the self - active processes of self-formation through narratives.

This theory posits that subjectivity is ever changing and can be simultaneously situated within and be reinforcing of power (Parker, 1992; Burr, 2003; Hook, 2007; Dickerson, 2012). Thus, in what has been known as a “top-down” approach, Foucauldian research interests lay in the kind of objects and subjects that are constructed through discourse and what “*ways-of-being these objects and subjects make available to people*” (Willig, 2013, p. 117). Therefore, when exploring narratives on familial estrangement, Foucault’s ideas on power enable a further investigative gaze on the influencing ways in which grand narratives on the family inhibit and enable what can be said, when, where, to and by whom about familial estrangement (Parker, 1992). This analytic method and its application to the research question, will be further explored in Chapter Three.

1.6: Post-Structuralism, Narratives and Family Estrangement in Counselling Psychology

Mainstream counselling and psychotherapy have often been criticised for their reification of dominant social values and norms. Brown (2007) suggests that the modern therapeutic encounter should move beyond the simple listening and retelling of clients' narratives "*to an active deconstruction of oppressive and unhelpful discourses*" (p. 3). As has been introduced here and will be examined further in Chapter Two, this reification can also be applied to the family. Adopting an anti-essentialist post-structuralist approach thus enables a critical approach to the power-laden socio-cultural and historical knowledges circulating about the family.

Identity and subjectivity have been particularly important fields of interest within counselling psychology. Foucault's construct of the traditional humanist assumptions of a singular, unified and stable self has instead provided an understanding of the ways in which identity can be constructed and changed within and between variously power-laden discourses (Hook, 2007; Murray, 2015). An examination of subject positions which are enabled and constrained by discourse allows a further critical focus and insight for the CoPs, and might increase their awareness of the power games located within their own talk.

This thesis will also aim to examine, via analysis of familial estrangement, what is enabled, what is restricted, for what purpose and by whom. Furthermore, it intends to explore the ways in which people present and re-present themselves, knowingly or otherwise - presentations in which, various elements of power are interwoven.

In order to address the interests of this thesis, I will offer, in Chapter Two, a genealogical review of knowledges circulating in western culture about the family and

on family estrangement. Genealogy is an analytic gaze which aims to make sense of how our present has become constituted in ways which are deemed natural and irrefutable but are actually, the effect of historical, socio-cultural, political and economic configurations (Agllias & Gray, 2013; Tamboukou, 2013). Thus, this approach aptly lends itself to understanding the socially constructed nature of the family and the social regulatory power dynamics in which the family and family estrangement are embroiled. In Chapter Three I will further detail the post-structuralist epistemological stance, method and methodology employed in this research. Resourced by the knowledge gained in Chapter Two, Chapter Four will then present the analytic findings of the FNA conducted, as applied to eleven individuals' narrative accounts of personal experiences of familial estrangement. Finally, to conclude, Chapter Five will present a discussion of the findings, possible contributions to the field of counselling psychology, an evaluation of the research and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO:

A Genealogy of Family Estrangement and the Family

“There is no life but Family.

When I am young, I live with my Family.

When I grow up, I leave my Family.

When I am lonely, I miss my Family.

When I am drunk, I reverse-charge my Family.

When I pass away, I unite my Family.

There is no life but Family”

‘Kumana’ by Ali Cobby Eckermann (2009)

2.1: Introduction to Chapter Two

The aim of this chapter is to critically review the varied and relevant literatures related to family estrangement and to the family, by applying a genealogical approach developed by Foucault (1977). Genealogy is a method of analysis that traces the historical discursive emergence of particular ideas, beliefs and social practices. It aims to make sense of how our present has become constituted in ways which are deemed natural and unquestionable and how certain phenomena become categorised as normal or, at different times, dysfunctional (Foucault, 1977; Hook, 2007).

For the purposes of this research, it is argued that the objectification of family estrangement does not pre-date language but is constituted through social meaning and practices. In line with this approach and due to the significant dearth of research and lack of lexicon (LeBey, 2001; Kradin, 2009) on family estrangement; thinking about normative constructions of the family across different perspectives; and

exploring the family's discursive developments through time, provides us with a lens through which we can better understand how family estrangement as a phenomenon, has been conceptualised. The purpose of this genealogy, therefore, is to highlight the various discursive influences that produce the "normal family" (Burr, 2003), and to explore the resulting power relations causing the stigmatisation and marginalisation of family estrangement.

Scabini, Marta and Lanz (2006) suggest that analyses on the family should be done within the specific historical, cultural and geographical contexts in which it is situated. Following that dictum, I will, in this chapter, select and summarise some of the predominant accounts of the family which have informed our understandings in the 21st century western UK culture in which this study is located. I will commence by presenting predominant "pre-contemporary" conceptualisations about the family and family estrangement in society as traced from "Antiquity" through to the "Enlightenment period". I will then summarise predominant "contemporary" conceptualisations, drawing on different theoretical and academic perspectives which have influenced and been influenced by our "current" understandings of family and family estrangement. The intention is not to suggest a uniformity on the notions of either of these two constructs at any one period, but to recognise those which have become the dominant representations of these phenomena.

2.2: Pre-Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement

In this section I will present key pre-contemporary constructions of the family and family estrangement, tracing their developments from Antiquity, through the

“Christian West of the Middle and Early Modern Ages”, to the Enlightenment period (the Eighteenth Century).

2.2.1: The Family in Antiquity

The period in history referred to as Antiquity typically signifies that prior to the Middle Ages (Harlow & Laurence, 2010). The surviving historical evidence of this period (as based primarily on Greek, Roman and Spartan communities), though fragmentary and eclectic, suggests that the family was treated as a fundamental component of social continuity (Harlow & Laurence, 2010). The Greek and Latin words for “family” were *oikos* and *familia* and although the word family has its origins in the word *familia*, in Antiquity, historians have noted that a more accurate translation of the terms *oikos* and *familia* was “household”. Thus, unlike today’s conventional definition of family – typically as comprising a mother, father and their children (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015), the family in Antiquity was generally understood as consisting of immediate biological relatives, as well as the wider kin group, including slaves, property and landholdings. More specifically, in Rome, the *familia* was recognised in law as any person or property under the power of the oldest living male (Goldberg, 2010); and it was common for many Romans to have used the terms *domus* (physical household) or *mei* (my people) (Harlow, 2010), rather than *familia*.

In Antiquity, the family group, adhered to a strict hierarchical structure and code of conduct which reflected the wider social norms of those times (Harlow, 2010). Its role was to replicate these public structures and codes and in so doing, to socialise children adequately to the power dynamics of their family and subsequently the wider social world (Parsons, 1959; Murdock, 1968; Segrin & Flora, 2011) - a role, interestingly, that still functions in contemporary life. Under this regime, children, and

often wives, were under the control and power of the father/husband; and the organisation of households had more to do with economic social stability, to uphold which, obligation was crucial and seemed to be valued over warmth and affection (Saller & Shaw, 1984). “State” intervention on family functioning greatly differed across Roman, Greek (specifically Athenian) and Spartan communities; and, according to Shelton (2010), significantly influenced the construction of the family.

In Athens, state legislators largely left familial issues, e.g. child rearing, marriages, punishments, to be privately managed. By contrast, in Rome, increased state intervention was seen during the time of Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome who ruled from 31B.C to 14 A.D. He had publicly tasked himself with restoring military, political and moral order. As documented by Shelton (2010), Augustus used the family as a means through which this could be accomplished and all matters, such as marital unions, reproduction and sexual relations, turned from being private to publicly legislative with a heavy penalty imposed on anyone deviating from social “norms”.

Sparta offered a particularly nuanced insight into family formation. In their pursuit of military supremacy, the state intervened in nearly every aspect of familial existence (Shelton, 2010); and all personal interests and relationships were considered subordinate to military requirements. Family affairs were centred around this necessity and had a significant influence over the lives of men, women and their children. Individuals, especially male children (as they comprised the military population), who were deemed unsuitable for or did not successfully fulfil these requirements, were often rejected and abandoned by the family and society (Shelton, 2010). Moreover, the focus on military hegemony meant that the reproduction of healthy, strong male children was prioritised and extramarital affairs which fulfilled this requirement were

not uncommon (Shelton, 2010). These practices meant that, unlike what Andersen (1991) contends are the conventional contemporary assumptions of a family as comprising a monogamous heterosexual couple and their children, the paternity of children was not simply legitimised through biology but through legality, with men often adopting “illegitimate” children. Constructing the family through such “legislative” practices, was common also in Roman and Athenian communities for which historical writings have recorded that children were only considered members of the family following the formal acknowledgment and acceptance by the father/head of the household (Harlow & Laurence, 2010; Shelton, 2010).

Considering the discursive legacy from Greco-Roman Antiquity, contemporary constructions of the family appear to have retained the idea of this social unit performing a significant role in the socialisation of children and in the upholding of social and public systems and practices (Muncie, Wetherell, Langan, Dallos & Cochrane, 1997). Moreover, in contemporary western society, the certification of families through such practices as marriages, births and deaths, (Davidoff et al., 1999) appears to be a continuation of the legislative practices found in Antiquity.

The stringent necessity for families to contribute towards the upholding of social practices and orders also appears to have enabled a more ruthless approach to the formation and practices of families. For example, contrary to the marginalisation of the discourse on family estrangement as seen in contemporary society (LeBey, 2001; Kradin, 2009), in Antiquity, estrangement practices were a public norm. According to Harlow (2010), infants that were less than physically perfect, born to a family with limited resources or where the child did not receive paternal acknowledgement and acceptance, were often subject to a widespread practice known as “exposure”, where they were abandoned to die. Likewise, Harlow (2010) and

Shelton (2010) note that adults who deviated from social norms and expectations were often shunned by the family. These acts of abandonment portray family estrangement as being tantamount to a “societal duty”, rather than being stigmatised as a shameful practice. And so, the conceptualisation of family estrangement in Antiquity supported this practice which was ruthlessly inflicted on another, with apparent indifference to the injurious consequences.

2.2.2: The Family in The Christian West of The Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age

Over a time-frame spanning the years 800 to 1400 A.D., (the “Middle Ages”), Europe saw an increase in state power, economic expansion, various demographic changes and in particular, a growing influence of the Christian Church, all of which greatly influenced the ideals and “realities” of family life (Wilkinson, 2010). In the early years of this period, the family, defined then as the household and its dependents, continued to be considered an extremely important social institution. Because of this, individual family structures were perhaps seen as exceptionally mutable and at times complex (Goldberg, 2010; Harlow & Laurence, 2010). Though state power is noted in historical documents as having increased during this period, it has also been argued that the state remained relatively uninvolved in the development and organisation of families (Goldberg, 2010); and unlike the previous era, families mainly reverted to being self-governing units. However, by contrast to Antiquity the increasing prominence of the Christian church from the eleventh century onwards, saw its rising influence over, and regulation of, the family (Woodhead, 2005; Goldberg, 2010).

Modern day translations of biblical texts evidence the importance placed on the family in early Christianity. In Genesis 1, the retelling of the creation of earth

commences with *“in the beginning ... God created the universe.... Then God said, “And now we will make human beings.... He created them male and female, blessed them, and said “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control”* (Good News Bible, 1976, p. 2). Contemporary conventional definitions of the nuclear family appear similarly aligned to this biblical notion of the family as a *“male and female”* and their *“children”*. Influenced by such readings, according to Ward (2010), there was a significant shift in ideas about family structures over this period; and the “Holy Family” of Mary, Joseph and Jesus began to serve as the model for the ideal (Christian) family unit. Although the wider community remained important (Goldberg, 2010), its focality and involvement in family practices gradually diminished as the church placed a greater emphasis on the importance of the smaller nuclear grouping (Ward, 2010).

This influence of the church on family life and its part in the continuity of a disciplined society and confessional state (Woodhead, 2005; Cavallo & Evangelisti, 2010), endured into the Early Modern Ages of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. According to Woodhead (2005), there was an increasingly popular belief that *“not only was the church the ideal family, the family was the ideal church”* (p. 342). Moreover, there was a powerful, dominant message that one of the family’s main duties was to raise children by means of affection and authority and, in return, for children to remain dutiful to their parents, a message reinforced through *“respect your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time”* (Exodus 20, Good News Bible, 1976, p. 19), as found in the Fifth Commandment. According to Cavallo and Evangelisti (2010), in contrast to the Antiquity period, this injected importance of *“affection and persuasion, together with authority”* (Cavallo & Evangelisti, 2010, p.

5) played a critical role in redefining the family and, moreover, was “*an important element for reinforcing its cohesion*” (Cavallo & Evangelisti, 2010, p. 5).

In addition to re-theorising the family (Vermeer, 2014), the church, particularly in the Early Modern Age, worked hard to deter practices of familial rejection or abandonment by imposing various bans, punishments and condemnations on those found attempting to desert their “familial duties” (Garver, 2010). These impositions also reinforced the notion of the family as a unit in which one should be assured safety, protection and unwavering loyalty - sentiments which appear to echo modern assumptions about the family as a cohesive safe-haven (Dallos & Draper, 2010).

Various cautionary tales about the rejection of the family and of the values of familial unity can be similarly located within biblical texts. For example, the story of Abraham and Ishmael tells of a father disowning and disinheriting his son (Genesis, 21, Good News Bible); whilst the story of Cain and Abel warns us of brotherly hatred (Genesis 4, Good News Bible). Cain’s retort to God’s enquiring of his brother’s whereabouts, “am I my brother’s keeper?” has become popularised in modern society as a moral code of conduct for brotherly guardianship, loyalty and protectiveness (Saslow et al., 2013). Likewise, in 2 Timothy, 3 (New American Standard Bible – NASB, 1995) we are told that “*in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self (...) disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving*” (2-3). These examples provide cautionary messages of the perils to be “expected”, when the ideals of family (i.e. parent-child) unity, obedience, cohesion and loyalty, are betrayed.

Interestingly, Woodhead (2005) contends that messages within the bible, particularly those relating to familial and religious duty and obligation are multiple, complex and sometimes contradictory. However, the Church appeared to emphasise

key messages about the sanctity of the family. According to Foucault (1982), this regulatory “pastoral power” rested upon the church’s ability to assure individual redemption; and the family became a necessary vessel through which religion could exercise its power and control over familial orderings and practices and also, as Butler (1990) contends, on the broader social ordering of gender based roles, expectations and divisions of labour. The family, according to Foucault (1982) and Mutch (2015), thus played an important educational and governing role within society.

Cavallo and Evangelisti (2010) argue that, although the Christian image of the ideal family depicted and endorsed a patriarchal hierarchical structure and a cohesive, stable unit, there were inevitable variations to the practices and their “realities” within individual households.

From the post-structuralist perspective adopted within this thesis, variations of families are, of course, expected (Haraway, 1992; Burr, 2003). The church’s dissemination of a normative, ideal family narrative was therefore purposeful and demonstrated the emergent co-existent social regulatory power of the church and the family. This depiction of the nuclear family as morally righteous and responsible for maintaining harmony in society, according to Gazi (2013) continues to have a powerful discursive influence on today’s society and its conceptualisation of the family. Moreover, this commanding message of familial affection and loyalty is one which writers, such as Kradin (2009), highlight as continuing to populate contemporary discourses, consequently marginalising discursive representations of alternative experiences and phenomena, such as family estrangement.

2.2.3: The Family in the Enlightenment Era

The Enlightenment era, which occupies the 18th Century, saw further changes to family life (Foyster & Marten, 2010); and although familial relationships continued to be variable, there was a continued tendency to propagate the monolithic account of the stable and ideal nuclear family (Shorter, 1976; Trumbach, 1978; Foyster & Marten, 2010). In these pre-industrial economies, there is evidence to suggest an even greater emphasis on working spousal partnerships and a loyalty to the importance of socialising children, transmitting social and cultural values and forming gender identities specific to socio-economic requirements (Muncie et al., 1997; Bailey, 2010; Charles, 2012). Consequently, the “individual” became increasingly subsumed within the family unit so that even individuals without biological families (e.g. orphans, abandoned children) were depicted as “finding families” in other institutions such as, orphanages, asylums and religious foundations. This conceptualisation was based on the principal conviction of that time that family pre-dated everything, thus life outside of a family structure was unimaginable (Foyster & Marten, 2010). Moreover, the individual could not be considered independent from some form of family ties. As will be examined in the proceeding sections, psychological perspectives appear to have retained this notion of the individual as inextricably intertwined with the family unit.

The formation of new families through marriage became viewed increasingly, as consistent with the social and economic ordering of society and this was supported by the foretold penalty of ecclesiastical or civil condemnation for those who departed from their marital/parental roles, neglected them or performed them badly (Bailey, 2010). Additionally, as Maynes and Waltner (2012) note, an effort to define gender and sexuality, and thereby, to offer separate and specific guidelines on behaviour, labour and responsibility, was a primary consideration during the Enlightenment

period. Consequently, men and women were introduced to prescribed social roles which were taught and exercised within the family. According to Bailey (2010) women were seen as being subject to what could be described as a “*cult of maternity.... conceptualised as tenderness, physical and emotional ministering to children, moral guidance of offspring, and personal sacrifice*” (pp. 24-25). Meanwhile, for men, fatherhood was deemed a symbol of mature manhood, fertility and authority. According to Bailey (2010), these stringent models for family life exerted a pressure on families to portray themselves in a favourable and conforming light, whether genuine or not, and I would posit that this requirement further rendered any alternative or unorthodox family experiences, unwelcomed and unacceptable.

In reviewing constructions of the family and family estrangement over this period, Foucault’s theory on governmentality appears to offer an interesting perspective on the family’s social regulatory power. Governmentality consists of practices and techniques in which the behaviour of individuals and populations is shaped and monitored (Foucault, 1991; Ristovski-Slijepcevic, Chapman & Beagan, 2010). Often disseminated through so called “expert knowledges”- in these cases, perhaps, religion and the state - various principles are established by which people can assess and be assessed. These include their values, attitudes and behaviour, through which they can project themselves or be projected as good, moral citizens. (Coveney, 1998). The family and its members now became subject to these demanding ideals and expectations about “goodness” (Bailey, 2010).

Like the societies of the past, the families of today are equally complex, variable, problematic and often, contradict normative ideals (Kradin, 2009). Yet, the conventional construction of the family, as found in today’s society, can perhaps be traced back to these idealistic and unilateral principles, out of which have evolved this

persistent grand narrative to portray families in western society as “good”, functioning and affectionate units (Davidoff et al., 1999; Kradin, 2009; Dallos & Draper, 2010; O’Reilly, 2014).

2.3: Summary of Pre-Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement

The preceding sections have aimed to examine the normative constructions of the family from Antiquity through to the Enlightenment period. In so doing, I have sought to provide a lens through which to examine family estrangement, identifying what practices of and discourses on the phenomenon have been enabled or inhibited. There appears to have been a central theme across these periods of shared ideals about the family as being fundamental as a socialising and regulatory agent. Initially, these ideas appeared to influence various practices in which families made changes, wherever necessary, to uphold their “societal duties”. Estrangement appeared to be one such practice as individuals who did not meet societal and or familial criteria, were likely to be expunged from the family, and broader social/community units. The Christian church’s increased influence, however, seems to have challenged this conceptualisation and practice. No longer depicted as a broad, mutable and varied unit, a nuclear, biologically focused and relational group became the normative construction of the family. It is argued that early Christian doctrine propagated the dual ideal of familial affection and loyalty and consequently, practices of estrangement were proscribed and vilified. As this chapter progresses, I will aim to continue to trace the influence of these ideas and developments, to highlight what have become the contemporary constructions of the family and family estrangement, within which our normative assumptions and truth claims may be located.

2.4: Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement

In this second section I will aim to trace and summarise key contemporary conceptualisations of these two phenomena, drawing on different theoretical and academic perspectives which have influenced and been influenced by our current understandings of family and family estrangement. The focus will be on various contemporary sociological and psychological perspectives recognising, in the light of social representations theory (SRT) (Moscovici, 1972), that these understandings are likely to have permeated society in multiple ways. As Fiske (1996) explains, “*to the extent that representations are ‘real’ in their effects, they produce what passes for ‘real’ in any particular conditions*” (p. 214). This offers an important insight into the bilateral relationship between sociological and psychological knowledges, and their application to public regulatory services, such as social services (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014).

Contemporary definitions of the family typically maintain that it is a group consisting of parents and their children (Gittins, 1993; Antonucci, Jackson & Biggs, 2007; Agllias & Gray, 2013; Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). It is a definition whose origins can be historically traced (as presented in the preceding sections) and whose inherent power has remained relatively consistent over the last two centuries. The United Nations (2015) contends that the family, is “*the natural and fundamental group unit of society*” and one which must be protected and supported. Contrary to this, academic disciplines such as anthropology and sociology have attempted to highlight the family’s complexities and ever-changing nature on societal, cultural, economic and structural levels (Miller, 2005; Seltzer et al., 2005; Miller, 2011); making the family, as post-structuralist researchers also propose, a contentious,

ambivalent and fluid construct (Stacey, 1997). Moreover, direct criticisms on the family as a concept have been extended, particularly by second wave feminist theorists, as Luxton (2015) and Allen (2016) note, who have argued that not only are families not natural, they are neither inevitable, nor necessary and instead play a significant role in the perpetuation of patriarchal, capitalist systems and their resulting inequalities and multifaceted power dynamics. Despite this, however, a central, persistent and idealistic perception of the family as a cohesive, nurturing, harmonious and enduring group is often perpetuated in modern western society (Agllias & Gray, 2013) in what Kradin (2009) calls, “the family myth”. The proceeding section of this chapter will introduce common sociological perspectives on the family within contemporary western society as well as various expert knowledges, such as those offered by psychology and therapeutic theories. The aim is to trace the discursive influence they appear to have had on what has continued to be considered “normal” in relation to the family and the consequence this has on constructions of family estrangement.

2.4.1: Sociological Observations on the Family and Family Estrangement

Sociology offers a useful insight into the opinions and practices of the family within contemporary western society and, consequently, on constructions of family estrangement. Sociological researchers have often maintained that the family is one of the most complex social institutions in existence and one which appears to be affected by a variety of factors (Hareven, 1987). Traditionally, it has often been conceptualised in one of three ways (Segrin & Flora, 2011):

- i) Structurally – This outlines the criteria, e.g. blood, law, upon which the family is alleged to be constituted;

- ii) Functionally – The performative function of the family and family members;
- iii) Transactionally – This includes notions of interaction between family members.

These will each be explored below.

2.4.1a: The Structural Family

One of the first and most traditional positions adopted, was influenced by the fundamental importance of biology (Elliot, 1986). In what appears to have remained a consistent line dating back to the Enlightenment period, early accounts of the organisation of sexual and parental relationships stressed the existence of specific biological necessities (Elliot, 1986). Amongst these were the survival of the species through procreation, the lengthy dependence of children and a need for secure, (heterosexual) sexual relationships. These necessities were said to have merged to produce a biological group, i.e. the nuclear family (Linton, 1949; Elliot, 1986; Davidoff et al., 1999). This argument was heavily supported by the frequently cited cross-cultural study of two hundred and fifty societies conducted by George Murdock (1968). In this study, Murdock acknowledged that whilst there was some variation in family structures, they were all underpinned by an element of biology. In this regard, the biological status of the nuclear family was labelled a “universal human grouping”, suggesting that not only was the family universal but also natural.

The definition offered at the start of this section, is evidence of this combined biological and pre-contemporary Christian influences, in its contention that the family is a group consisting of parents and their children. Andersen (1991), in support, argues that the dominant North American ideology identifies the “real” family as comprising

a heterosexual couple and their biological children. Various other authors have suggested that our continued attachment to this definition is due to the importance placed, both academically and culturally, on genetics (Floyd, Mikkelsen & Judd, 2006; Galvin, 2006). Research by Schneider (1980) supported this assertion by proposing that participants tended to privilege “blood-ties” and that familial relationships, particularly between a parent and child, were deemed un-severable. Baxter, Norwood, Asbury and Scharp (2014) explained that with a perceived *“inevitability and naturalness”* of biology comes an *“assumption that a parent will have an inherent and unwavering love for a biological child”* (p. 260). This inherent love is viewed as being unbreakable (Miall, 1989) and thus, a discourse on genetics appears to have emerged, reifying the notion of the family not only as biologically founded but as enduring. Research on adoption has further shown that both birth mothers and adoptive parents expressed feeling stigmatised by others for their respective decisions regarding adoption. (Baxter, Norwood, Asbury, Jannusch & Scharp, 2012; Baxter, Scharp, Asbury, Jannusch & Norwood, 2012). This further supports the notion of a dominant discourse and favourability of (unwavering) biological familial relationships. It also suggests that when a choice is made to sever this biological relationship, as is sometimes the case with estrangement, this choice might be met with a stigma and an assumed deviance (Crabb & Augoutinos, 2008). These findings importantly demonstrate how alternative family discourses may become stigmatised and marginalised.

Foucault’s ideas on biopower and biopolitics are also relevant. Whilst there have been varying definitions for each of these concepts, here, biopower is understood as a form of power oriented towards human beings as members of a species with specific biological characteristics. Biopolitics consists of the techniques, practices and

procedures aimed towards the organisation, regulation and governing of activities undertaken by human beings (Foucault, 1978; 2003). Whilst family is argued to be “natural” through a presumed biological underpinning, social/governmental intervention through law plays a significant role in its regulation (Muncie et al., 1997). If contemporary ideas about the nuclear family are said to have arisen out of the organization of sexual and parental relationships, it can therefore be conceptualised as an example of biopolitics. Similarly, marriage, birth and death, listed amongst numerous other familial legislative certifications (Davidoff et al., 1999) are further examples that families continue to be constituted and regulated by external governing bodies. The privileging of biological ties and its enmeshment in biopolitics (e.g. legal practices) provide a sound argument that the family is socio-culturally accepted as an obligatory and enduring relationship, not a choice (Yoshimura, 2006; Petronio & Durham, 2008) and explains why, Bernardes (1999) posits that critical evaluations of the family in academia have often been neglected or avoided.

Interestingly however, one could also contend that if the family were indeed such a natural entity, it would and should not require any regulation. Thus, the various legal and governmental bodies, policies and practices aimed at monitoring and regulating families perhaps conversely expose the family as a mutable construct which serves a purpose and needs therefore to be tightly regulated and maintained. In many ways, family estrangement supports this notion of the family as a mutable construct (Burr, 2003); and challenges the suggestion, based on biology and biopolitics, that it is unseverable. Furthermore, it offers to us an opportunity to critically evaluate the elements of power which previously permitted the family a status of incontestability, and in which discourses of family estrangement have remained relatively marginalised.

2.4.1b: The Functional Family

The “functional” model on the family offers a valuable perspective on the privileging, within contemporary society, of the nuclear family over the larger kin group (Muncie et al., 1997). According to Parsons (1959), the large kin group was a multi-functional one, performing religious, political, educational and economic tasks. Obligations to the wider kin group were said to have outweighed those between the mother, father and child. The development away from this larger kin group towards the smaller, modern nuclear family is said to have occurred over an extended period of time; however, it is often argued that it has been more speedily advanced by western society’s progression towards industrialisation.

According to this model, as people were increasingly encouraged and required to travel away from the family home/community to work, the family’s roles as multifaceted units became reduced. Because of this development, the reliance on and thus obligation to the wider kin group and community diminished even more and the family became further limited to the parent/child nuclear system (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Davidoff et al., 1999; Kagitcibasi, 2007). Murdock (1968) and Parsons (1959), leading figures in this approach, outlined the family as being responsible for the following primary functions:

- i) Providing stable sexual (monogamous) relationships
- ii) Reproduction of the next generation
- iii) Socialisation of children
- iv) Meeting its members economic and emotional needs

In sustaining these core functions, much like the pre-contemporary beliefs examined above, the family was considered to play a significant role in the development of the individual and the further stability and continuity of society (Elliot, 1986: Segrin &

Flora, 2011). Not only was the family seen therefore as progressing and maintaining the structure of society but it was also understood as evolving to best suit the ever-changing needs of the society in which it existed. Thus, as western societies progressed into industrialisation, the family's evolution from the larger, more self-sufficient and multi-functional group into the smaller, more function-focussed and limited nuclear family, better suited the more complex industrial society and its need for a specialised, mobile and function-focussed labour force (Muncie et al., 1997; Charles, 2012).

Functionalism is said to have been a dominant British and American observation and conclusion about the family for much of the 1940s, 50s and 60s and remained for decades a popular school of thought in the US (Muncie et al., 1997). However, some scholars have also recognised that functionalism has tended to focus on those which fit the theory and have neglected to include any observations on families which lie outside the model. In arguably over-simplified and idealistic analyses, families with differences in ethnicity, race and class and in which any dysfunctions or conflicts are present were often not included in the literature (Davidoff et al., 1999). Significantly, research by Baxter et al. (2009) found that in analysing individuals' discourse, similarly idealistic constructions of the family (Davidoff et al., 1999; Kradin, 2009) appear to permeate their common "lay conceptions" about this social construct. This finding further demonstrates how, influenced by historical discursive developments, normative ideals about the family are produced and perpetuated in contemporary society.

2.4.1c: The Transactional Family

The "transactional" family model offers a nuanced examination of the family by reflecting on its discursive and variable nature (Gubrium & Holstein, 1990).

According to Baxter et al. (2009), once a biogenetic focus has been established, the boundaries between the remaining structural and functional features as they constitute the family, become somewhat blurred. This obscurity creates space to conceptualise the family in other more varied and flexible ways. Thus, a movement away from the family solely as a set of ties, structure or function, to an alternative construct as transactional or interactional, appears to have emerged; and the family, according to Morgan (1996; 1999) has become understood not simply as something you are, but as something you do. This change in understanding also reflected an emphasis on the role that communication plays in constituting what it means to be a family both internally (i.e. between members) and externally (i.e. to the outside world) (Galvin, 2006; Baxter et al., 2009). According to Giddens (1992), this exemplifies a more postmodernist society where family members may typically be more resistant to the prescribed social roles and constraints associated with more traditional societal structures and, through communication, take a more active role in creating and regulating themselves and their relationships.

This model, it is suggested, rather than maintaining the popular view of a biologically underpinned (nuclear) family, might better encapsulate the family as the complex, variably constructed and fluid social group it is proposed to be (Burr, 2003; Kradin, 2009). However, research conducted by Baxter et al. (2009) replicated findings by Trost (1990) and Ford (1994), both of whom uncovered that individuals' discourses about what constitutes a family continue to perpetuate notions offered by more traditional theories. Baxter and colleagues (2009), argue that this replication should not simply be treated as validation of traditional biogenetic/structural and functional opinions about the family but rather, reflective of the discursive power which those traditional opinions continue to hold, and their overwhelming ability to

infiltrate our ways of thinking about the family - so much so, that we become subject to them and, consequently, any deviations from these normative views, become discursively marginalised. Longitudinal research conducted by Miller (2011) also suggested that when talking about the family, individuals do appear to reflect upon and include the fluidity and complexity found within their family units, particularly regarding changing gender norms/roles. However, importantly, various socio-economic structures and cultural variants appear predominantly to have maintained traditional ascendancy (e.g. sole maternity rather than shared mat/paternity leave) making it difficult for some families to fully exercise, and thus perhaps speak of, these changes in reality. This interesting finding crucially highlights the ongoing enmeshment between society, social/economic structures and the family; and the resultant parts they play in maintaining a social regulatory power over individuals. Furthermore, this appears to contribute to perpetuated discursive truth claims about the nature of families and family practices.

Whilst family estrangement has often remained a marginalised discourse, some sociological observations have noted its occurrence both in historical and contemporary societies. Kunesh (2007) found that in many tribes, estrangement or banishment from one's family is often considered the harshest forms of punishment, typically inflicted upon anyone who has deviated from the family's and/or tribe's norms and expectations. Likewise, Hostetler (1993) remarked upon the practice of *Meidung* in Amish communities as a temporary estranging of a person by their family as a warning of what to expect should they fail to comply with familial and societal rules and expectations. These examples serve to highlight the ongoing discursive practices of family estrangement, as an unequivocally adverse experience but moreover, as with pre-contemporary societies, as a unilateral act.

2.4.2: The Family and Identity Theory

Sociology and psychology have both shown keen interests in the study of “identity”; and each field continues to influence and be influenced by conceptualisations of the family. Consistently, the family has been positioned as having a profound influence on the ways in which we make sense of the world and as being a uniquely important group in shaping our personal and social identities (Farmer, 1979; Lawler, 2008). According to symbolic interaction theory, identities are developed, maintained and transformed through the interaction and impact that individuals have with and on others (Charon & Hall, 2009). The family thus is seen as substantially informing our sense of who we are and thus the ways in which we identify ourselves (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm & Steinmetz, 1993; Charon & Hall, 2009).

Similarly significant is the work on patterns of attachment (i.e. attachment theory) as conceptualised by Bowlby (1969). Attachment theory proposes that significant relationships, particularly with family members, provide internal working models of the self and a template for future relationships. While this theory, has been initially applied to childhood patterns, subsequent work has attempted to apply it to adult relationships (Bartholomew & Harowitz, 1991; Moser, Jones, Zaorski, Mirsalimi & Lucher, 2005; Bryng-Hall, 2008). Erikson's (1959) psychosocial model of development and later work by Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer and Orlofsky (1993) have indicated that, amongst other factors, the family influences the ways in which individuals develop and negotiate their personality/identity from childhood to adulthood. The common assertions about the nature and stability of these attachments have however, been questioned (Berghaus, 2011). Davila and Cobb (2004) note that there is an increasing body of evidence which suggests that there is a high potential

for change in adult attachments. And it has been suggested that attachment theory might, therefore, be too simplistic to fully conceptualise adult relationships. This calls into question the commonly held assertions, within psychotherapy, of the importance and impact of the family on individual identities throughout the lifespan.

From a post-structuralist perspective, statements of truth about the existence of a consistent self, identity or attachment are questionable and problematic (Burr, 2003). However, these theories on identity have all been hugely influential in the development of an array of psychological approaches (Simonelli, Ray & Pincus, 2004) (e.g. psychodynamic therapy, family/systemic therapy), and our assumptions and expectations, as therapists, of the role that families play on individual development and wellbeing (Palmer, Dainow & Milner, 1996; Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). To further contextualise, the proceeding sections will aim to trace the various constructions of the family and family estrangement as found in some key psychotherapeutic theories and discourses.

2.4.3: The Family in Traditional Psychoanalysis

Revolutionary for its time (Ellman, 2010), Freudian theory offers an interesting and important insight into constructions of the family in early psychotherapeutic work (Gay, 1985). This section aims to explore these constructions and to relate their discursive influence to what we (especially in the therapeutic community) have arguably come to understand and believe about the family.

Freud's theories, like the religious perspectives explored previously, echoed the centrality of the familial triad, i.e. the relationship between the mother, father and child. The significance of this specific triad heavily dominated early psychoanalysis (Davidoff et al., 1999) and has provided a formative understanding within modern

counselling and psychotherapy. It is important to note, however, that whilst an examination of Freud's theories can provide some useful insight into the psychoanalytic constructions of the normative family, he did not directly comment on the family, but rather, focussed on the individual as embedded within a family unit (Harkness, 2014).

According to Freud, the Oedipus complex provided an explanation for universal human development; and he proposes a variety of ways in which social constructions (i.e. gender identity, sexuality etc.) might be incorporated into individual consciousness (Frosh, 1987). In this complex, the male child possesses a sexual desire towards his mother, but this is rebutted by the father's overriding authority and threatening presence. The child's obedience to this authority results in his eventual repression of his maternal desire and an identification with his father (Freud, 1930). This Oedipal construct, which was later expanded to include female development in a mirroring way, can thus be seen symbolically as a socialisation of the child to the sexual and power structures and ordering within society (Hirst & Woolley, 1982). To Freud, civilisation was dependent upon the repression, restraint and renunciation of certain individual, biological instincts and needs (Connell, 1987). The family thus, was seen as acting as the mediator between the child, culture and society and ultimately as the medium in which this is achieved (Muncie et al., 1997).

Freud and traditional psychoanalysis have faced many criticisms, among which is that about the universal claim for the Oedipus complex. Freud, whose career began in medicine, posited that psychoanalysis and his theories were scientific/biological and ones which could, therefore, be universally applied (Lerman, 1986; Ahmed, 2012). In the case of the Oedipus complex however, anthropological investigations have disputed this claim, countering that in many societies, this

complex does not appear to apply (Malinowski, 1927; Mead, 1928; Moore, 2007). Various psychological investigations have supported this challenge (Valentine, 1956; Eysenck, 1985). Additionally, Foucault, according to Basaure (2009), contended that the Oedipus complex and psychoanalysis were not the uncovering of some universal and intrinsic aspect of human existence but instead were just other instruments of power. The family, according to Foucault, acted as a “*medical-sexual order*” (Basaure, 2009, p. 351), and played an active role with psychoanalysis in the disciplining of individuals (Foucault, 1979). The Oedipus complex in particular, he argued, could be located within a distinctive relationship which exists between disciplinary systems and the family.

Freud’s theories have been hugely instrumental in providing what, for years, became the normative model upon which individual psychosexual development was understood (Ellman, 2010). Importantly, from a discursive perspective these theories appear to contain remnants of the conventional beliefs from the Enlightenment period, reifying normative assumptions about the family and preserving its regulatory power over individuals (Bailey, 2010; Maynes & Waltner, 2012).

2.4.4: The Family in Object Relations and Humanistic Theories and Therapy

Freud has remained influential within psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapy (Ellman, 2010; Feltham, 2013); however, in time, many clinicians began to reinterpret and expand upon his theories, giving rise to alternative schools of thought, such as Object Relations Theories (ORT) (Corey, 2013). Contrary to the theories proposed by Freud and early psychoanalysis, they focus not only on biological drives and instincts but on the importance of relationships, particularly those between an infant and their familial caregiver (Ellman, 2010). Similarly, Humanistic

Theory/Therapy (HT) has also been fundamental in counselling psychology (Woolfe, et al., 2010). Unlike psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theories which highlight unconscious thoughts, desires and drives, HT, which is Person Centred Theory/Therapy (PCT), highlights lived experience and phenomenological investigation as its philosophical base (Yalom, 1980). Like Freudian theory and the pre-contemporary conceptualisations documented during the Enlightenment period, however, ORT and HT also concerned themselves primarily with the study of the individual as embedded within a family unit, in preference to the family itself. The proceeding sections will offer a brief contextualising overview of these understandings.

Winnicott's (1965) theories on the "good enough mother", Bion's (1970) "container-contained", Klein's "good breast, bad breast" (1945) and Fairbairn's theories (1943; 1952; 1958), focussed on the mother's ability to afford her child sufficient love, discipline and attention for the healthy emotional and psychological development and maturity of the child (Celani, 2007; Ellman, 2010). The contention was that if this relationship and environment could be provided in a good and consistent enough way, that no life struggle or conflict would prove unresolvable (Muncie et al., 1997; Scharff, 2004). Similarly, PCT indicates the significance of the parent-child relationship in the child's development explaining that as children develop from infancy to adulthood, an internal conflict begins to separate them from their awareness of their own authentic "experiencing" (Rogers, 1961; Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). In order to receive validation, approval and love, they suppress aspects of themselves which they deem undesirable in the eyes of their primary caregivers (i.e. parents). Thus, their need for approval and love can impair their ability to be authentic (Rogers, 1961; Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). In this reasoning,

the child's relationship with their family and their familial environment has a significant impact on the child's development and way of being.

Interestingly, in PCT, very little was written about the family explicitly and Rogers (1961) (founding father) made clear his disinterest in proposing a model for family life. Instead he offered observations about the impact that PCT could have on the individual and the subsequent implications of that on the family. Accordingly, he proposed that, having undergone therapy, individuals might find themselves, within their family unit, better able to express themselves emotionally, to communicate more reciprocally, to experience familial relationships more "authentically" and to gain a deeper appreciation for and acceptance of their own and their family members' independence (Rogers, 1961). Whilst these suggestions are insightful, they appear to imply that the change an individual experiences in therapy can be equally and effortlessly applied within a family unit. This implication, arguably rests upon a commonly held idealistic assumption in PCT and other psychotherapeutic discourses (Anderson, 2001), that the family environment is ever-open, welcoming of and flexible to change and difference. Contrastingly, some advocates of this approach have commented on the possible inevitability of family disillusionment and have moved towards a person centred (PC) - family therapy (Mearns & Thorne, 2000; Cooper, O'Hara, Schmid & Bohart, 2013). Nevertheless, the theory offered within psychotherapeutic training continues generally to consist of incomplete family conceptualisations (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). Importantly, in this incompleteness, there appears to have been little exploration of what happens when the family unit ruptures and how this should be handled by therapists working with clients who have experienced these ruptures.

2.4.5: The Family in Systemic Theory

As previously cited, holistic constructions of the family in psychotherapeutic theories have often been neglected and instead, have tended to focus on locating the family as a determinant of individual behaviour and patterns of relating (Harkness, 2014). Moreover, there has been little extensive focus on theories about sibling relationships (Cicirelli, 1995). The development of theories and approaches focussed on the functioning of the family as a whole, such as systemic therapy (Borcsa, Hanks & Vetere, 2013), have therefore provided us with greater insight into the ways in which the family is holistically constructed in psychological therapies.

Similar to the psychoanalytic, object relations and humanistic perspectives explored previously, early systemic thought focussed primarily on the individual. However, heavily influenced by theories such as symbolic interactionism (Boss et al., 1993; Charon & Hall, 2009), “pathology” gradually became understood not as an individual phenomenon, but fundamentally as an interpersonal one. Thus, exploration and analysis of the systemic family-unit based dynamics which served to produce and maintain symptoms such as distress, were central to this way of thinking and practicing.

Like early constructions of the family, particularly in Antiquity, systemic theory offered a view to the psychotherapeutic community that families were complex units governed by a set of rules which could be relatively fixed but also, which could be subject to change. The “family life cycle” model (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980) proposed that with marriages, births and bereavements (for example), the family was in a constant state of evolution and adaptation and in need of finding solutions to cope with these changes. It was argued that these solutions and ways of negotiating change remain constantly interconnected in three key areas:

- i) **Social, cultural and spiritual:** What is deemed acceptable and desirable within any given society as guided by traditions, customs, laws etc.
- ii) **Familial:** How family members jointly negotiate decisions based on their internalisation of sociocultural discourses and expectations; and on their own set of shared beliefs.
- iii) **Personal:** How the family manage and negotiate the individual beliefs which each member holds based primarily on the interactions with external systems (e.g. friends).

Moreover, constant, open communication between individuals was seen as playing a significant role in managing and maintaining the balance between relationships and the system as a whole (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, Weatland & Fisch, 1974).

The work by Bowen (1978) deepened this understanding of early systems theories and is arguably one of the major psychotherapeutic theories which highlight the possibility and phenomenon of family estrangement as a consequence of “fusion” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Brown, 1999). Fusion can be understood as a lack of differentiation, and the practice of putting the needs of the individual aside in service of harmony within the system/family. Bowen (1978) posited that fusion can be seen in all families to a certain degree but that the greater the family’s tendency to fuse, the less likely they will be to adapt to periods of stress, disruption and change in a flexible and balanced way (Brown, 1999). When fusion becomes experienced within a family system to extremity, individuals might respond to that experience through an emotional and/or physical, “cutoff”, i.e. an attempt to detach oneself from the family system (Brown, 1999; Crossno, 2011). Alternatively, individuals might deal with the tension caused by fusion, by attempting to restore harmony at all costs. Family

estrangement can thus be conceptualised, within this theory, as an attempt to escape the tension and distress circulating within the family system and, crucially, affecting its members' relationships. According to Crossno (2011), Bowen was attempting to emphasise the relational feature of cutoffs (e.g. family estrangements) and the need for families to find solutions for diffusing fusion, where individuals could simultaneously differentiate whilst maintaining a comfortable, flexible attachment to the system and its members.

Conceptualising the family in this way, reflects a greater consideration for families' complexities and mutabilities than that in the previously discussed (individualistic) theories. Conversely, this theory also appears to reify ideas of the normative family when examining the "functional" versus the "dysfunctional" family unit. Furthermore, terms such as cutoff and "rupture", as commonly located within systems theories, discursively construct familial relationships as ones which can be re-connected and therefore fixed - a predominant focus of authors such as LaSala (2000) and Dattilio and Nichols (2011). But the irreparability of a familial relationship – as is sometimes located within estrangement experiences – continues to remain unfathomable.

The anti-psychiatry work of R.D. Laing offers an additionally useful insight into the conceptualisation of family systems as pertaining to psychotherapeutic practices and theories. Laing (Laing & Esterson, 1964) proposed that schizophrenia, rather than the objectively clinical entity it had become, was instead, perhaps, the result of deficient or defective family systems. In what was extremely controversial, Laing suggested that the family was not always the ideal environment for the individual. This work, consequently, came under heavy criticism, accused of "family blaming" (Lebeau, 2015). Importantly, others have suggested that this criticism was

often used as an attempt to discredit Laing and his work (Johnstone, 1993) and in so doing, to silence what was otherwise heralded as an exploration of social intelligibility - enabling thinking, feeling and speaking - which went against the taboo of “*talking about what happens in families*” (Dillon, as quoted in Lebeau, 2015, p. 306). Crucially, this battle has further highlighted the regulatory power and control which the family exerted and arguably continues to exert within psychotherapeutic discourse.

2.5: Summary of Contemporary Perspectives on the Family and Family Estrangement

The sections above have aimed to trace the various conceptualisations of the family as observed by sociology and as reflected in various psychotherapeutic knowledges. These knowledges, it is argued, significantly influence public regulatory systems, in turn creating a shared hegemonic discourse of agreement about normative family practices. This hegemony is of interest to this thesis, particularly as it pertains to the silencing of alternative discourses, such as that on family estrangement.

From a sociological perspective, there appears to have been an evolutionary narrowing of the family as a small, nuclear unit, from its larger “household” group. Additionally, a genetic/biological focus reified the notion of an unwavering familial loyalty and natural bond. As society has evolved, so too have these perspectives, and sociological accounts have reflected the more dynamic and transactional aspects of family life and family practice. Like the pre-contemporary perspectives, however, there has been an ongoing tendency for the family to be constructed in largely idealistic ways, consequently reinforcing ideas about what families “should” be like (Dallos & Draper, 2010; O’Reilly, 2014). According to Butler (2004) such categories upon which social life and specifically, the family, are ordered serve to produce an

incoherence and “unspeakability” about certain things. Consequently, family estrangement, the phenomenon which demonstrates what families should “not” be like, has become ignored and marginalised.

Psychological perspectives on the family have likewise been rather monolithic perspectives. Crucially, many theories have neglected to criticise, reflect upon or analyse the family; instead their focus on the family has been, simply, as a determinant of individual behaviour and development. Often, those who have addressed family dynamics have either done so with an idealistic, reifying view about what families should be or how they can be fixed (e.g. systemic family theory/practice); or have found themselves being silenced by the therapeutic community (e.g. R.D. Laing).

2.6: Concluding Remarks

This chapter has aimed to trace the historical discursive emergence in which particular ways of constructing normative ideas and beliefs about the family and family practices have emerged. In so doing, it has aimed to explore the way in which the family’s social regulatory power has developed and been sustained throughout time and consequently, the discursive power relations which have become embedded within the objectification, stigmatisation and marginalisation of family estrangement.

Foucault’s theories have been used throughout this chapter to conceptualise these shifting power dynamics. Interestingly, his ideas on familial power shifted throughout the course of his own career (Taylor, 2012). However, what remained, was his view that the idealistic story of the nuclear family, accepted as universal, objective and fixed, is one which needs critiquing and, perhaps, debunking. According to Taylor (2012), analysing Foucault’s theories on the relationship between family and power uncovered the following, *“the conclusion is the same: anyone who resists being part*

of such a family or who undermines its ruse of inevitability (...) must be abnormal and poses a threat to society” (p. 215). Together, these constructions of the family and of family estrangement, evidence why the latter has perhaps become so marginalised and paradoxically, requires further empirical exploration and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE:

Method and Methodology

“The work of an intellectual is not to mould the political will of others; it is, through the analyses that he does in his own field, to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities, to reevaluate rules and institutions.”

Foucault (1989, p. 462)

3.1: Introduction to Chapter Three

This chapter introduces the post-structuralist method and methodology adopted for this research question, - *how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?* As introduced in Chapter One, I employed a Foucauldian narrative analysis (FNA), informed by a post-structuralist epistemological stance (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013; Tamboukou, 2013; Willig, 2013; Murray, 2015). I will firstly introduce FNA and its epistemological premises and then locate it within psychological research. Secondly, I will present the methodological design used to ethically recruit participants and collect data. Thirdly I will outline the analytic steps I took to produce the findings presented in Chapter Four. I will then conclude by considering my reflexivity as the researcher and the criteria for quality in qualitative research, on which these findings will be evaluated in Chapter Five.

3.2: Post-Structuralist Epistemology and Foucauldian Narrative Analysis

Epistemology is the philosophical study on theories of knowledge which attempts to answer the question, “*how, and what, can we know?*” (Willig, 2013, p. 4). It frames how we make sense of the knowledge which we seek and claim to produce through research (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Traditional mainstream psychology, as introduced in Chapter One, was heavily influenced by a modernist stance which, in turn, influenced realist epistemology. Realism assumed that a truthful, accurate and reliable picture and understanding of particular experiences and phenomena was obtainable through empirical enquiry (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003; Willig, 2013). Gradually, however, post-structuralism and its philosophical stance towards knowledge, meaning, truth and the understanding of human experiences (Burr, 2003) became an increasingly influential perspective for critically orientated psychologists who began to question and progress away from structuralism and the specified certainties of modernism. What emerged from this, was a particular interest in the ways in which language constructs, rather than reflects, reality. As explored in Chapter One, a post-structuralist epistemology focuses on the “*constructed and relative nature of talk*” (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, p. 206). Meaning is thus viewed as a social construct with a focus on generativity and the mutability of language (Burr, 2003). By adopting a narrative approach, this research aims to make visible, the socially constructed nature of family estrangement. The remainder of this section will aim to develop an overview of the FNA used to analyse the data.

3.2.1: Narrative Theory and Analysis.

Though multiply defined, the term narrative can be understood as an account of personal experiences and events (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). Narrative theory suggests that in a world where we constantly experience changes and disruptions, narratives provide us with a fundamental means of bringing order to such changes; and make sense of our experiences, ourselves and our lives (Ricoeur, 1988; Herman 2009; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013; Willig, 2013; Murray, 2015). It is through narratives that individual experiences are ordered and infused with meaning (Bruner, 1990; Willig, 2013). Viewed critically, not only can the nature of narratives be scrutinised but, through analysis, the relationship between everyday “talk” and social constructs of cultural norms and power discourses (Ochs & Capps, 2001) can be examined.

Contemporary narrative research is located within two parallel academic movements (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). The first, a more person-centred approach, focuses on that which can be uncovered through individual case studies and biographies. The second, more post-structuralist approach, is similarly interested in story structure and content but is also concerned with narrative fluidity and contradiction, as well as the contingent power relations from which narratives are evolved. The point at which these approaches depart tends to lay within the researcher’s philosophical stance and interpretation of the narratives, as representing either an individual’s internal state or external social contexts. Narrative approaches such as that offered by Hollway and Jefferson (2000), for example, attempt to explore and uncover the way in which narratives can reveal something about what an individual is thinking or feeling. Whilst these approaches may offer a unique and insightful perspective into personal experience, they assume that a consistent and

objective truth or reality exists. In so doing, they differ from those put forward by post-structuralist researchers about the roles which mutable social contexts, processes and power play on our discursive constructs of experience. Post-structuralist researchers, thus, consider how narratives represent and are the effect of specific historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts and discourses, rather than being natural and unquestionable truths (Malson, 2004; Tamboukou, 2013).

3.2.2: Foucauldian narrative analysis

Influenced by Foucault's notions on the inseparability of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980), FNA aims to explore the ways in which power intervenes to produce in ascendancy, certain truths and knowledges (Besley, 2001; Tamboukou, 2013) and moreover, the way in which these truths and knowledges are perpetuated through narrative and discourse (Tamboukou, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2014).

Some analytical approaches to language such as Discursive Psychology (DP) emphasise the action orientation of language and specifically, the interactional work that "talk" does (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Researchers applying this bottom-up analytic gaze, therefore attend to micro-level aspects of speech and focus on things which might be accomplished through language such as managing accountability (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards & Stokoe, 2004). By contrast, a Foucauldian, top-down approach is interested in issues of power, ideological practice and social processes at a macro-level (Parker, 1992). Moreover, unlike more realist and psychodynamic approaches to language, it does not seek to uncover any hidden meanings or universal and objective truths (Burr, 2003), but is instead interested in the multiplicities of meanings which can be found in personal accounts; and how different stories appear to oppose and connect with other stories, discourses and practices; and

the impact this has on shaping meanings, perspectives and ultimately, creating the subject (Tamboukou, 2013).

FNA is argued to be an appropriate methodology for revealing the mutability of reality and providing a space in which that which was previously perceived as “certain” and true may be critically re-examined (Freire, 2000; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Tamboukou, 2013). Considering the research question and analytic interests of this research, it is therefore presented as being particularly appropriate because it identifies key available vernacular ways of talking about familial estrangement whilst unmasking the discursive power games with which these participants are often unwittingly engaged.

Foucault did not detail or prescribe any method for approaching research. Instead, he argued that researchers should refrain from becoming bound by any “*predetermined starting point and destination*” (Foucault, 1980, p. 79). Similarly, Foucauldian informed researchers (e.g. Tamboukou, 2013) have been reluctant to offer any detailed method by which to conduct research; and each study is treated as topic specific. In spite, here, of the contradiction of standardisation, some researchers have sought to provide loose guidelines for Foucauldian approaches to narrative and discourse analyses (Hook, 2007; Tamboukou, 2013; Willig, 2013); and these have been useful in the completion of this research.

Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008), and Tamboukou (2013) posit that firstly, deploying a historical perspective on the “*various ways, discourses and practices that human beings have used to make sense of themselves and the world*” (Tamboukou, 2013, p. 88) helps to shed light on that which has been accepted as natural and indisputable. I have aimed to discuss this in Chapter Two’s genealogy, thereby providing a conceptual overview of the changing concepts around the family

and family estrangement. Resourced by this, Chapter Four offers a detailed investigation of individual constructions of experiences of estrangement whilst also aiming to demonstrate how individuals are made subjects, highlighting the discursive practices through which they are positioned.

3.3: Design of proposed study

In order to address the research question, *how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?*, eleven volunteer participants were interviewed about their personal experiences of familial estrangement. These accounts were elicited through the use of semi-structured individual interviews with participants who were recruited via opportunity sampling. Semi-structured interviewing is commonly recognised as an appropriate way of assembling relevant and detailed texts and from which narrative patterns can be analysed (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Willig, 2013; Murray, 2015).

The ideal sample size for narrative research remains relatively indeterminate (Sandelowski, 1998). Some studies have employed case studies in their focus on autobiographical accounts (Emerson & Frosh, 2004). Wells (2011) suggests, however, that the sample size should relate to the purpose of the study, the extensiveness of the interview procedure and the analysis. Moreover, Wells (2011) proposes that studies more exploratory in nature should recruit more than five participants. Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) suggest that, for discourse analytic approaches incorporating a Foucauldian gaze, a sample size of around ten may offer sufficiently in-depth accounts for analysis. Whilst recognising that adequately detailed accounts might have been garnered with a smaller sample, in line with Willig's and Stainton-Rogers's (2008) suggestion, this study aimed to recruit at least ten participants. It was anticipated that ten accounts would provide the researcher with transcripts sufficiently

detailed to uncover any narrative patterns and nuanced ways of talking about estrangement as well as highlighting discursive power games.

3.3.1: Ethics

Ethical approval was sought from the University of Roehampton Ethics Committee (reference: PSYC 16/ 215) and granted on 12th May 2016. This research adheres to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014). Pseudonyms were adopted in the storage of interview data and throughout the analysis and presentation of results. Any identifiable information in the narratives has been removed or anonymised. All data has been stored and will continue to be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, guidelines offered by The Centre for Research in Social and Psychological Transformation (University of Roehampton) and the BPS's Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014).

Family estrangement is one which carries with it an array of emotional experiences (e.g. distress, guilt, anger) (LeBey, 2001; Sichel, 2004; Agllias, 2017) and so, the researcher was mindful that, for some participants, speaking about it may evoke emotional distress. However, as the researcher is also a trainee CoP with considerable clinical experience, including therapeutic experience with estranged individuals, the research/supervisory team was confident that the interview process, participants' wellbeing and any ensuing distress could be suitably, ethically and sensitively managed. In order to further circumvent the possibility of distress, the following considerations were applied:

1) Recruitment:

Primary recruitment was conducted via estrangement charity, Stand Alone's, research database where individuals interested in participating in any research are first required

to complete a CORE 10-questionnaire, measuring psychological distress/functioning (Barkham et al., 2013). As an additional inclusion consideration for this study and way of taking into account any pre-existing psychological vulnerabilities which might have increased the possibility of emotional distress, it was agreed with the Founder/CEO that in the initial stages of recruitment, a filter would be applied so that the recruitment flyer would only be sent to individuals who had scored between 0 (healthy) to 20 (moderate) on the CORE 10-questionnaire.

In addition to nine participants recruited via this research network, two participants were recruited outside of this network. One of these was an individual who the researcher had no prior knowledge of but who accompanied another participant to their interview and expressed a desire to participate. The other was a therapist who had heard about this study. Neither of these two participants completed the CORE 10-questionnaire. However, whilst discussing the research topic and process with each separately, the researcher, applying clinical judgement, assessed them to be practically and clinically suitable for the study.

2) Interview Process

Prior to the interview commencing, participants were informed that if at any point the interview process became too demanding or distressing, they could pause or discontinue. It was also explained to participants that, should it appear that they were becoming emotionally distressed, the researcher, applying their clinical judgement, may interrupt the interview by recommending either a break or termination. At the end of each interview, as explained below, a debrief was conducted.

A recruitment email (see Appendix 1) was sent to suitable prospective participants by Stand Alone's Founder and CEO. On expressing an interest in participating in the research, their contact details were sent to the researcher who then contacted each individually and provided them with an additional information form (Appendix 2), a copy of the consent form (Appendix 3), proposed interview questions (see section 3.3.3, below) and the demographics questionnaire (Appendix 4). Participants were asked to review each form and then to confirm whether they still wished to participate in this study.

Once individuals gave their initial consent to participate, a date, time and location for the interview were agreed. At the start of each interview, the information form was reviewed and participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. The consent form listed 6 consent statements including confirmation that the participant had read and understood the information sheet, detailing their rights and limits to confidentiality, their right to withdraw from the study and the storage, processing and treatment of their data. On commencing the interview, participants were reminded also of their right to terminate at any stage. At the end of the interview, a debrief was conducted and participants were provided with a debrief form (Appendix 5). This form also contained a list of resources should any of the participants have found themselves feeling unsettled after the interview and in need of additional support. The consent form and debrief forms, provided the contact details for the researcher, Director of Studies and Head of Psychology Department so that any further questions or concerns could be raised.

In line with other doctoral research projects (e.g. Randol, 2014), participants were not directly offered a copy of their interview transcripts for review; however, one participant asked for this and was emailed a copy. Similarly, no explicit promise in

advance was made about sharing the completed thesis. However, a summarised report of the research will be completed and disseminated in collaboration with Stand Alone. Thereafter, access to the ratified thesis, post-viva, will be available for participants on request.

3.3.2: Participants

Participants were recruited as previously outlined. Inclusion criteria specified that participants be over the age of 18 and must identify themselves as having, at one stage in their lives, been estranged, i.e. having ceased physical contact with at least one member of their nuclear family or having had at least one member of their nuclear family cease physical contact with them. In line with other research in this field (Robinson, 2011; Agllias, 2013), individuals were required to have experienced their estrangement for a minimum of six months. Participants were further required to be able to communicate fluently in English. Demographics were collected from each participant and a summary is reproduced in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Demographics details of participants and their estrangements

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Nationality	Self-defined Ethnicity	Key Reported Estrangements From	Reported Length of estrangements
1	49	F	Irish	Caucasian	Father	7-8 years
2	41	F	British	Caucasian	Mother Brother Father Sister	20 years 20 years 10 years 10 years
3	60	F	British	White	Father Sister Brother	2 years 6 years 6 years
4	23	F	British	Asian	Mother Brother Sister	4 years 4 years 4 years
5	49	F	British	White	Mother	1 year
6	75	F	Canadian	White	Daughters	30 years
7	55	F	British	White	Sister Brother	1 year 5 years
8	49	M	British	White/European	Mother Father	1+ years 1 years
9	67	F	UK-Welsh	White	Brother (ex)- Spouse 4 children	14 years 19 years 19 years
10	40	M	British	White	Mother Father Sister	1 year 1 year 1 year
11	22	M	British	Anglo-Indian	Mother Father	1 year 1 year

Note. Aside from the “reported estrangements” above, many participants also spoke of these as causing additional “ripple effect” estrangements (to varying degrees) with other family members. The estrangements reported above should thus be understood as those central to these specific narrative accounts, as should the reported lengths of the estrangement.

3.3.3: Pilot Study and Final Interview Schedule:

A pilot interview was conducted with an individual who, though having some experience of familial estrangement, did not fully meet the inclusion criteria. The intention was to gauge the appropriateness and clarity of the interview questions and the researcher's handling of the interview process. The interviewee was informed of the purpose and agreed to provide feedback following the interview. Through this the interviewee offered some helpful observations:-

- that the introductory session of the interview was too lengthy and recommended the following procedure:-
- Interviewer introduces self;
- Interviewer offers brief summary of research topic and interview process;
- Interviewer confirms with participant that the nature and purpose of and process involved are understood and;
- Interviewer invites questions.

The interviewee also observed that at times the interview had become more conversational and that whilst this made them feel more relaxed, it might hinder others from giving an uninterrupted account of their experience. The researcher thanked the interviewee and incorporated the suggestions into the process and sought also to be more measured with interjections thereby allowing the participants to talk as freely as possible (Langellier, 1989).

Following this practice interview, a further "pilot" interview was conducted. The data from this interview was deemed appropriate to use within the final analysis and so became participant 1, Rebecca. This "pilot" highlighted the need to include a question on the meaning and function of family. Additionally, Rebecca began towards the end of the interview to consider her motives for participating in the study. The

researcher speculated on whether this might, in other interviews, prompt the interviewee to expand on the experience of familial estrangement and so, decided to add this question to the interview schedule.

A final working interview schedule was drawn up to provide guidance for the researcher and consistency for participants. Participants were also advised that the interview might trigger additional (prompting) questions. Each interview commenced with the following opening statement:

“I wonder if you could begin by telling me about your experience of estrangement, perhaps, how it began and developed from there?”.

The remaining questions covered, included:

- 1) “Following your experience of estrangement, what impact/effect do you feel it has had on you and your life, if any?”*
- 2) “Looking back on your experience, what do you feel the function and role of the family is in today’s culture/society?”*
- 3) “Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experience, that I have not already asked about?”*
- 4) “Can I ask why you decided to take part in this research?”*

Follow up questions were additionally used as appropriate.

Interviews were designed to last 45 to 60 minutes; however, participants were made aware that in order to allow each interview to flow freely and end naturally, this length might vary. The shortest interview was recorded at 25 minutes and the longest, 90 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded. Most interviews took place at The

University of Roehampton; however, provisions were made for one interview to take place at the researcher's place of work, and three in participants' homes. In order to further maintain anonymity and confidentiality, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

3.4: Analysis and Analytic Steps

Here, I will describe the analytic steps I took to analyse the data.

3.4.1: FNA

There is no one method or way in which narrative analyses must be done (Riessman, 1993). Patterson (2013) argues that narratives uncover the complexity and subtlety of experiences and thus, to treat or expect them to conform to a paradigmatic model is futile. Foucault was particularly critical of a prescriptive methodology (Rabinow, 1984); and this idea of non-prescriptiveness is fitting with post-structuralism which denies the presence of an underlying truth or a method for its discovery. Approaching the narratives on familial estrangement was therefore done in a flexible and open way and I have found it especially useful to utilise both narrative and Foucauldian discourse approaches as analytic frameworks. For clarity, I will therefore aim, to outline the approach to narratives which I adopted, followed by the Foucauldian discourse analytic guidelines applied.

After transcribing the audio recordings, I began by actively engaging with the data, reading and re-reading the transcripts (Arribas-Allynnon & Walkerdine, 2008). Similar to the work done by Emerson and Frosh (2004), from there, I adopted an eclectic approach drawing on both Labov (1972) and Gee (1991) as points of departure. For Labov (1972), I adopted his proposed "question method" asking the following:

- What is the story about?
- Who is introduced/involved, when and where does this take place?
- What happened?
- So what?
- What happened next?

Influenced by Gee (1991), I analysed the narratives in terms of themes and stanzas (Riessman, 1993). This approach according to Riessman (1993), is more appropriate for handling ongoing and subjective narratives. Through this, one might uncover the “*conditions of the narrator’s life and the way she experiences, and endures them*” (Patterson, 2013, p. 40); and thus, it allows space for changes, reconstructions and contradictions (Riessman, 1993).

3.4.2: Foucauldian Discourse Analytic Steps

In narrowing my gaze more specifically on the operational power games at play and the consequences which dominant representations have, including the ways in which people may become subject through systemic power inherent in their “talk” (O’Callaghan, 2010), I drew on Willig’s (2013) six-step guidelines to analysing discourse. Initially, I focussed on how familial estrangement was discursively objectified, noticing what constructions of intelligibility appeared to resource the accounts. For example, various normative assumptions about the family appeared to significantly contribute to the way in which familial estrangement was conceptualised. Throughout, I attempted to hold in mind how participants might be being projected by the broader socio-cultural discourses occupying their accounts and the contingent power relations of these understandings. Secondly, I began to consider the productiveness of the discourse being utilised (Foucault, 1980), and aimed to identify

what appeared to be enabled or constrained within these discourses. Defining the boundaries of estrangement, dividing practices and negotiations of shifting power dynamics (Foucault, 1980; Parker, 1999; Bergner, 2009) became evident during this process. This contributed substantially towards the third step during which, I began to interrogate the emergence of various subject positions. I attended to the discursive power within each and considered how they were enabling or inhibiting certain constructions and discourses about familial estrangement. Finally, I began to tentatively explore the ways in which certain subject positions appeared to reflect and be associated with what Willig (2013) refers to as “*ways-of-being*” (p. 133) - for example, seeing oneself as a victim or initiator of an estrangement. This seemed pertinent to how participants expressed a sense of meaning around familial estrangement and the family in society.

During the analysis of these eleven accounts, it became evident that familial estrangement was being narrated in diverse and nuanced ways. This analysis unmasked various power relations in the normative assumptions and regulatory social practices related to the family which appeared to contribute to the constructions on perceptions about familial estrangement. Moreover, I would suggest that the unmasking of various local power relations as illustrated by heterogeneous subject positions, addresses the research question at hand. These results will be presented in Chapter Four, with illustrative extracts.

This post-structuralist approach acknowledges that the analysis which will be presented in Chapter Four is the inevitable product of the researcher and participants being actors of and subjects within networks of socio-cultural meaning (Willig, 2013). Qualitative research advocates the acknowledgement of researcher reflexivity in order to make evident the interpretive nature of research and any possible implications of

the researcher's involvement in the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Therefore, as part of my analysis, my own subjectivities were considered and my reflections on these are presented below.

3.5: Researcher's Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be defined as a researcher's ability to turn a "*critical gaze towards themselves*" (Finlay, 2003, p. 3). It is a practice which has gained increasing significance in psychotherapeutic discourse, as an educational tool in professional training (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009, Woolfe et al., 2010) and as a standard of professional competency (BPS, 2005). Within qualitative research, the researcher is recognised as playing an inevitable part in the research topic, and thus, holds an important responsibility to recognise what influences might inform their involvement and understanding of the accounts produced (Finlay & Gough, 2003). As Parker (2015, p. 56) aptly asserts "*we need to be aware of ourselves as the dreamers (...) unlike instances of other people telling us their dreams, we understand and share, partially at least, at some level, the story.*"

Traditional personal researcher reflexivity suggests that an attempt should be made to discover and make explicit the researcher's motives and hidden agenda so as to be always aware and aim, therefore, to limit, their effect on the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2003). This stance however is suggestive of a realist perspective and its implication of a stable self which can be objectively known through personal reflection (Gough, 2003). Contrastingly, post-structuralist researchers understand the self to be mutable, relational and incomplete (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009) and therefore that it is impossible to untangle the researcher from the researched. A post-structuralist approach to reflexivity therefore emphasises the location of the researcher within

prevailing discourses relevant to the topic (Harper, 2003) and denies any claims to possible researcher transparency and limit to researcher impact. To Foucault (1979), reflexivity can be understood as a surveillance practice in which people become aware of and regulate themselves towards cultural norms, standards and practices. Therefore, the aim should be to identify the power, truth claims and “givens” to which we are subject (Foucault, 1978; Parker, 1999; Butler, 2005). According to Butler (2004) the ways in which we construct and present our reflections are not of our own making but rather, are always constrained within the frames of intelligibility in which we are constituted. Total reflexivity can therefore never be achieved, so we should remain ever critical of our reflexive practice. This account of researcher reflexivity is therefore offered in an attempt to provide a context in which this research was conducted whilst also offering a critique of the practice of reflexivity.

During my training as a CoP, I worked as a group facilitator for Stand Alone. This work made me more aware of the enormity of the phenomenon of family estrangement and from this, I became increasingly interested in people’s varying experiences of it. I sought psychological literature in order to aid my development as a group facilitator. Despite the prevalence of family estrangement (Stand Alone, 2014) particularly within clinical contexts (Dattilio & Nichols, 2011), I was surprised by the shortage of research and literature on the topic especially within counselling psychology. I thus became interested in what this may signify about the marginalisation of discourses on family estrangement; and became motivated to contribute to this limited body of psychological literature, by exploring the ways in which narratives about these experiences are constructed in the context of multiple power relations.

I was also struck during my training by the lack of emphasis placed on exploring, discussing and understanding the complexities of familial relationships, particularly, when ruptures (e.g. estrangements) occurred. Instead, I noticed the normative and assumptive statements and “understandings” about families which were variously utilised in discursive interactions. I thus became acutely aware of the occasions when I worked with clients who had found it difficult, for various reasons to address these complexities and in turn, the difficulties I faced in facilitating this exploration. This exposure highlighted the ways in which this experience is likely silenced socially and clinically, in favour of other conventional discourses about the family and family dynamics (Kradin, 2009).

Finally, although I am not currently estranged, I have personally experienced both physical and emotional familial estrangement. It was not however until my experience as a group facilitator and through the therapeutic requirements of my training that I became sensitised to these personal experiences. This further enlightened me about the ways in which I had silenced my own experience and allowed it to be silenced by others.

To Foucault (1978), reflexivity is concerned with the application of a critical gaze towards one’s self. This gaze is about questioning your own position within the research and about resisting discursive norms which have informed various truths and givens (Butler, 2004). Through this post-structuralist approach towards reflexivity, I therefore attempted to become aware of some of my own views about the family and, consequently, familial estrangement. I thus began to question the norms (Burr, 2003; Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000; Taylor, 2012) which featured in my thinking and which emerged in my talk. Many of these could be located within literature and popular culture references and conceptualisations of the family. This process has

caused me to become increasingly cognisant of the associated power games in which I am entangled and inevitably become subject to, and the ongoing tendencies to inhabit and evacuate these truths. A further critique of my reflexive practice will be presented in Chapter Five (see 5.3.3).

3.6: Criteria for quality in qualitative research

Sensitivity to context, rigour, coherence, importance and impact (Yardley, 2011) are issues which may be considered in the evaluation of good qualitative research. Sensitivity to context has been addressed particularly in Chapters One and Two. For rigour and coherence, section 3.4. of this chapter aimed to outline the analytic steps taken in a clear and progressive manner and in so doing, detail the thoroughness sought in the analytic process.

Post-structuralist studies are not concerned with the accuracy of or truth within discourses as these are viewed as socially constructed. Instead, they aim to question and interrogate the consequences of specific ideas and discourses, the ways in which people employ certain discourses and maybe simultaneously talked, and subjected by, these discourses.

(Foucault, 1982; Harper, 2003). Thus, there is no concern with reliability or validity as these very concepts are social constructs which assume that the researcher can remain objective and independent from the subject of the study (Parker, 1999). There instead lays an openness to the co-constructive nature of research with the researcher viewed as being inextricably intertwined in the subject matter and thus located within the research due to their interpretive position. In accordance with a post-structuralist stance the search for a universal ‘truth’ therefore becomes irrelevant.

The reading of the data within this study is therefore seen as being one of many possible perspectives and one in which alternative meanings were neglected in order to formulate and offer a coherent analysis. It is however the reader who must judge the rhetorical importance and impact of the study (Willig, 2013). Finally, in Chapter Five, an evaluation and critique of this research and the applied method will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Results

“We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.”

Foucault (1979, p. 194)

4.1: Introduction to Chapter Four

This chapter presents the analysis of interview data from eleven individuals who identified themselves as having experienced a familial estrangement, as outlined in the previous chapter. Following the FNA which addressed the research question- *how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?* three narrative trajectories were identified:-

- “familial strangers”,
- “familial estrangees”
- and one - “questioning the binaries” – that unsettles these dichotomous narratives on estrangement.

Each of these trajectories comprised distinct sets of micro subject positions, locating participants in diverse discursive power relations, some of which are illustrated here.

Overall, these findings, one of many possible readings, suggest that narratives on familial estrangement can be multiply constructed and, broadly, that they can be understood from the protagonist positions of stranger, estrangee or an evacuation of

these positions. Furthermore, throughout these accounts, those involved seem to be positioned in distinct sets of discursive relations of empowerment or enfeeblement. Such findings are of relevance to CoPs and therapeutic practitioners generally, in their quest to understand the complex constructions of family; demonstrating its normative social regulatory power over individuals and how, through estrangement, that power can be critiqued and unsettled, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary table of Narrative Trajectories and their constitutive subject positions

Narrative Trajectories	Constitutive subject positions
Familial Estrangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuck in the family, powerless and unsafe. • Accessed agency: “biting back” • Separated from the family and accepting the loss
Familial Estrangees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family keeper • Abandoned by family • Realising the family myth yet grieving the family lost
Questioning the binaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambiguous families: questioning the normality of the family • Abandoned and abandoning • What is a family, anyway?

In order to illustrate these main findings, the following analysis will focus on each of the three narrative trajectories along with the distinct discursive power relations in their constitutive subject positions. With a narrative focus in mind, in most cases extracts from each of the eleven participants will be presented, to demonstrate the unfoldings, from beginning to end, of their individual accounts. Furthermore, to capture the diversity within these accounts, commentary will be presented between the extracts, with a summarising commentary at the end of the section.

4.2: Familial Estrangers' Narrative trajectory:

Participants who offered an estranger narrative, produced storied accounts firstly of feeling stuck and powerless in their family of origin. In the turning point of this narrative, participants appeared to conceptualise that they were not the problem: that it was the family that did not work. Finally, an acceptance of the necessity of leaving, despite its consequence of loss was mobilised, constructing the narrative's dénouement.

4.2.1: Subject Position (1) of Estrangers: Stuck in the family, powerless and unsafe

The following extracts present the initial narrative positions of six adults who constructed accounts of having ended their familial relationship(s).

Extract 1:

"It'd be like, metaphorically stepping on eggshells (...); school would be quite hard and I'd like to go home to a nice environment but it was never like that.... My dad, wouldn't really care about what was going on; he'd go to work and that was it; come

back and go to work and he'd never really cared about anything else or supported anyone." (Keith)

Extract 2:

"I think, I felt that, me and my full brother were the trial family and the next ones [step-family] were the ones who got it right." (Damian)

Here, the family is introduced as loveless, empty and disregarding. The metaphor, *"stepping on eggshells"*, conceptualises and describes Keith's environment, while capturing the caution and lack of care for him by his father who *"wouldn't really care about what was going on."* Similarly, Damian shares his memory of a tenuous family in which he (and his brother) appeared unremarkable and, consequently, disposable, explaining that he always felt that he and his brother were the *"trial family"*.

Extract 3:

"My father was quite physical when we were children. He'd um, beat me to the floor and pick me up and beat me down again." (Ryan)

Extract 4:

"She was very physically violent (...) mostly towards me." (Eleanor)

Extract 5:

“He’d always had the potential for violence. I wouldn’t say historically he had been particularly violent, not towards us, but you were always fearful of the potential for violence.” (Rebecca)

Contrary to being ignored, others talk about being stuck in a more fearful, violent environment. Ryan recalls repeatedly being “beat (...) to the floor” whilst Eleanor speaks of a “*physically violent*” mother whose violence was directed mostly towards her. Finally, as Rebecca surmises, “*you were always fearful of the potential for violence*”.

Extract 6:

“Everything in my life was controlled and monitored.... I couldn’t have high aspirations; I couldn’t be independent: that was all part of the control. Some may say overprotectiveness but I think it went beyond that.” (Pia)

Rather than being ignored or experiencing a threat or reality of violence, Pia explains that “*everything in her life was controlled*” thus offering another variant of an oppressive familial environment at the hands of her mother.

In these extracts, by drawing vividly on childhood memories, these adult participants reconstructed their family lives as loveless, violent and/or controlling, capturing some of the fear, lovelessness and emptiness of that period in their lives. On one level, these extracts undermine and discredit the normative constructions about the family as a nurturing, safe-haven (Dallos & Draper, 2010), instead producing

accounts of bleak childhoods in oppressive and loveless families. At the same time, paradoxically, they are also, implicitly, appealing to that norm, by suggesting that the family “shouldn’t” be like this.

According to Riesmann (1993), “*where one chooses to begin and end a narrative can profoundly alter its shape and meaning*” (p. 18). Commencing an account with such austere truth claims about the family, might bear significant importance on the way in which the remaining accounts unfold, enabling a discourse of choosing to abandon the family to emerge. Moreover, Edley and Wetherell (1997) propose that in discourse, individuals often depict their own identity through a related process of differentiation, i.e., “*those who are not ‘us’ define who ‘we’ are*” (p. 210). As each of these participants introduces a key offending character (i.e. mothers or fathers) in their accounts, they become specific in differentiating themselves from the offender (Dickerson, 2000). In so doing, the participants become subject to a discourse of powerlessness and of being trapped. This lack of power may contradict any assumptions about the individual being identified as an estranger. However, it simultaneously discursively legitimises the necessity to estrange oneself from an oppressive family, and thereby positions the individual as empowered in their act.

4.2.2: Subject Position (2) of Estrangers: Accessed agency: “biting back”

The turning point for this estranger narrative seems to involve a power shift usually following a particular incident. For example, Pia’s fear that her mother’s control had become too great, and Ryan’s dispute with his parents and sister about an inheritance, compelled each to assert that, enough was enough.

Extract 7:

“This particular incident in lots of ways is not the worst of things that’s happened: we’ve dealt with other things but we’ve never really fixed them; and so for me, this was the straw that broke the camel’s back; and once I decided well look, if you can’t be honest with me and we can’t sort these things out, then there’s, there’s nothing left.” (Ryan)

Extract 8:

“It’s been going on for so long: we’ve been trying and trying and trying and that was the last straw.” (Keith)

Extract 9:

“I think that was the point where I started to take back some power for myself and I said actually: I’m not going to listen to this bullshit anymore; I just don’t want to hear this, this isn’t right.” (Rebecca)

In the extracts above, Ryan, Keith and Rebecca, each appear to identify a critical moment as the turning point in their familial experiences. Similar to earlier discourse, Ryan mobilises the clichéd metaphor, *“the straw that broke the camel’s back”*; whilst Keith similarly states, *“that was the last straw”*: each capturing their mounting discontent and pointed anger. This is similarly demonstrated by Rebecca who after witnessing another abusive interaction between her father and mother, decided that she wasn’t *“going to listen to this bullshit anymore”*. In so doing, these three extracts indicate that a critical “breaking point” had been reached, for change and agency to be activated.

Extract 10:

“I messaged a few friends at my university to tell them that I need to leave right now: that was it really; that feeling of fear that when she went out, I thought, she might turn the internet off and then I would have no communication with anyone at all.” (Pia)

Extract 11:

[Eleanor enacted her claim of estrangement by writing a letter to her mother] *“It had two lines, ‘I’m having counselling for some issues in my life. I don’t want to hear from you’. That was it; and I sent that to her and I was absolutely petrified that she was going to come and get me but she didn’t; nothing happened at all. It’s funny isn’t it; you’re so frightened of them and then you stand.” (Eleanor)*

Contrary to capturing anger, Pia and Eleanor introduce fear and its involvement in estrangement. This is seen for example when Pia describes how *“that feeling of fear”* acted as a catalyst, triggering her to think *“I need to leave right now.”* Like Ryan, Keith and Rebecca, Eleanor’s extract seems to introduce a mounting tension and “breaking point”, where she then asserted her estrangement. When Eleanor says, *“I sent that to her and I was absolutely petrified”*, she also introduces fear’s involvement, however, rather than being a catalyst for change, fear seems to be introduced as consequential. However, in stating *“you’re so frightened of them and then you stand”*, there is a sense that Eleanor’s fear might also have pre-dated her estrangement and, perhaps, contributed to her breaking point. In paraphrasing the metaphorical expression, “taking a stand” the moment at which fear becomes empowerment seems, furthermore, to be identified.

Extract 12:

“I had to make a decision and it became easier not to make contact so, you know, the gap between phone calls became longer and longer and then just stopped. So I suppose I instigated it but I think a part of it was for self-preservation and self-protection.”

(Damian)

The previous extracts appear to introduce a core emotion of fear or anger. By contrast, Damian’s shifting position is produced as being the result of a discontent with the familial dynamic and relationships, conceptualising them as detrimental. In this account, the decision to estrange is constructed as being for “*self-preservation and self-protection*”, this creates an impression that change was activated via a “fight or flight” survival instinct and thus, unavoidable and necessary.

The extracts above contextualise the turning points for these estrangers, by portraying the active shift in perspective that enables them to leave. The accounts above appear to distance each of the speakers from their previous position as a stuck and powerless victim and repositions each as an active agent of change.

Interestingly, they also each identify a specific moment of transition. In Chapter One, Foucault’s theory on this relational, transitional nature of power was introduced. The extracts presented above demonstrate this as participants move from accounts of being trapped and powerless, to biting back. Expressions of mounting fear, having had enough and a conceptualisation that self-preservation could only be reached through change, exemplify various forms of reactive resistance to the callous, oppressive power to which participants were previously subject; and the portrayal of their families, rather than they themselves, as the problem. Repeated usage of the word

‘I’ as seen throughout the extracts, is a feature in discourse which Burr (2003) explains may index a speaker’s sense of agency and responsibility. This appears to further mobilise participants’ agency in many of the extracts above. Moreover, the presence of various “empowering” statements, e.g. “*and then you stand*” (Eleanor), “*I started to take back some power for myself*” (Rebecca), seems to further evidence a shift in discursive power as the “victim” becomes the “agent”.

The genealogy offered in Chapter Two, introduced the position that familial estrangement has sometimes historically been conceptualised as a family’s “societal duty”, and an act done to another: i.e. to the estrangee. The extracts above present an opposing account of estrangement. Here, estrangement is constructed as something that someone has done, rather than it being done to them: i.e. done by an estranger rather than to an estrangee. Moreover, the extracts appear to present the rationale for estrangement as being the consequence of accumulating unhappy, unfulfilling and dysfunctional familial relationships.

4.2.3: Subject Position (3) of Estrangers: Separated from the family and accepting the loss

The dénouement of the familial estranger narrative, presents a mixed, though mostly empowering, ending to these storied accounts; portraying participants’ self-efficacy and acceptance of their estrangements but also the difficulty, pain, discomfort and loss, that sometimes, linger on.

Extract 13:

“There was an empowerment, like, I don’t have to live this way. The first point of cutting off was difficult and painful, yeah; those feelings were powerful, but over time, it’s still that, empowering.” (Keith)

A 180° shifting process of transformation appears to be construed in these familial estrangers’ closing accounts. From a powerless, trapped victim, as initially introduced, the discourse here instead, embodies a sense of empowerment. This empowerment however, is not exclusive and some participants also reference a sense of pain and loss. This is found, for example, when Keith explains that *“cutting off”* from his family was *“difficult and painful”*. However, despite this, his decision to estrange came after realising *“I don’t have to live this way”*, and appears to have enabled an overriding sense of *“empowerment”*.

Extract 14:

“I used to think, oh God, I’ve lost everything.... But eventually, I could set down all their goals for me and start to establish my own goals; and slowly the see saw tilted with less harmful stuff and more and more happiness and sort of self-efficacy.” (Eleanor)

Extract 15:

“It took me a while to untangle what was, what my real beliefs and feelings were as opposed to what had been drummed into me; and that was hard, evaluating everything you once thought (...). It’s probably made me very independent and self-reliant and

sometimes, that's impacted my relationship with my wife but yeah (...) it's made me very um self-sufficient and I'm happier with the way I am." (Damian)

Extract 16:

"My community, my family, my mum, see me as being shameful: shameful for what I'm doing; bringing shame. But I reclaim that and I always now say that their shame is my honour and that is what I live with every day: that is what I hold on to." (Pia)

Rather than explicitly referencing empowerment, Eleanor's, Damian's and Pia's, discourse appears to depict an acquired "intellectual" freedom and empowerment following their estrangements, and, consequently, a process of re-evaluation being enabled. Eleanor characterises this when she states that she *"could set down all their goals for her and start to establish her own goals"*. Moreover, when she affirms that, *"the see saw tilted with less harmful stuff and more (...) self-efficacy"* she appears to continue the thread that the family, rather than the individual (i.e. she), was problematic. Like Eleanor, Damian describes "untangling" himself from his family's beliefs and values and experiencing a transformation towards being *"independent and self-reliant"*; presenting himself as *"happier"* now. Similarly, Pia demonstrates an apparent "liberation", explaining that she reclaimed her family's shame and now proudly affirms that *"their shame is my honour"*.

Contrary to Eleanor's account which appears to set aside and reject her family's ideals, Pia's account seems to retain the familial messages she has been sent about shame and honour but reverses the sentiments contained therein. In so doing, her talk appears to dismiss the construct which her parents perceived as shame, instead

embracing it as her honour, thereby, implicitly transferring the label “problematic” from herself to her parents.

Despite the “growth”, transformation and apparent happiness, some of these speakers also register a sense of loss. Eleanor does so explicitly in stating that she used to think *“oh God, I’ve lost everything”*. Likewise, when Pia states, *“that is what I live with every day, that is what I hold on to”* there is the implication that her regained sense of honour enables her to compensate for the loss of her family.

Extract 17:

“Accepting my part in it; accepting that I’m choosing to step away; that, I guess, I am punishing them to a certain extent; I am limiting my own parent and there’s consequences to that that I am choosing and I accept responsibility for that and even though some of that still feels uncomfortable; but I find it easier to live with that than I do with how I felt before. And coming to terms with that, not having to think about it constantly has been really empowering. It has enabled me to do lots of things I hadn’t been able to do; has opened doors for me to grow more and yeah, that’s been nice.”
(Ryan).

Ryan’s extract concludes with a similar portrayal of mixed emotions including loss, discomfort and empowerment. Interestingly, what Ryan’s extract also does is introduce a theme of regulatory power by constructing estrangement as an act of *“limiting my own parent.”* Foucault explored the ways in which discipline and punishment served as regulatory (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). In their initial narrative positions, oppression, fear and parental animosity, seemingly operated as regulatory powers against these strangers; however, with the turning point and

shifting power dynamic, they appear to mobilise a new regulatory power, particularly, over their parents, as Ryan demonstrates in acknowledging that he is “*punishing them to a certain extent*”.

The same may also be seen in Pia’s extract. That is, the shame which was used to control and oppress her, is now depicted as being converted to honour and used by Pia to liberate herself and punish her mother.

An array of outcomes is highlighted in this narrative’s dénouement, demonstrating a complexity and ambiguity of emotions. Participants seem to predominantly affirm that estrangement has enabled growth, freedom and empowerment. In so doing, the estranger narrative appears to take the form of a romantic, progressive narrative (Frye, 1957; Smith, 2015) in which the protagonists have overcome their previous familial hardships and adversities and have “*found ways to let go of bitterness and hate and accepted the dark parts of life without being defeated by them*” (Baures, 1996, pp. 81-82).

The extracts do also present elements of loss and discomfort as consequences of familial estrangement and, as is captured by Rebecca when she states:

[Extract 18:] “*There’s still a sense that, the music isn’t playing anymore, but you can still hear the echoes*” – an impression is provided that the price of these separations, may continue to be extracted indefinitely, though in diminishing amounts. Importantly, however, from these experiences, empowerment seems to have outweighed loss and discomfort. Constructing estrangement from the position of an estranger, appears to specifically facilitate this romantic, progressive discourse.

4.3: Familial Estrangees' Narrative Trajectories:

The estrangee narrative commences with participants presented in apparent positions of power as the “keepers” and “peace makers” of their families. There they seem to be subject to the cultural norm of “families stay together”. However, from the experience of being abandoned, they begin to construe their original role and experiences as located in a myth. This depicted “revelation”, enables participants to construct accounts in which they are positioned as relieved and grateful but in which they are also left sad, abandoned and longing for the “family lost”.

4.3.1: Subject Position (1) of Estrangees: The Family Keeper

The following extracts present the initial narrative positions of four adults who identified acts of estrangement being done to them.

Extract 19:

“My position in the family, I think being the eldest, was that I was always the peace maker.... I had that role within the family.” (Paula).

Extract 20:

“I was the one that always tried to keep the family together.... Right through our childhood; right from when we were little, mum and dad were always fighting, um, and mum would take to her bedroom so dad would send me up to sit on the edge of the bed to try to get her to come down and talk to him” (Jennifer)

Extract 21:

“Though things were difficult, tense...I still always tried to keep contact with my family (...); to keep the relationships going.” (Jane)

Extract 22:

“I was a good mother.... We had a good you know a good, what I thought was a good family life except for his alcoholism. ... He started running around with this one woman and I was so naïve in that I didn’t realise what was going on; but the strange part about it was that the children seemed to side with him (...) whereas I was the one that seemed to you know, do all the things to keep things together.” (Heather)

These extracts illustrate participants’ apparent positions of power construct memories of being the ones who actively tried to maintain their family’s cohesiveness and harmony. This is demonstrated as Paula notes that she *“was always the peace maker”*. Similarly, Jennifer shares, that following her parents’ arguments she was often sent by her dad *“to try to get her [mum] to come down and talk to him”*. She is depicted as the go-between, the peace maker and the *“one that always tried to keep the family together.”* Heather and Jane each also share this sentiment when they respectively claim that *“I was the one that seemed to you know, do all the things to keep things together”* and *“I still always tried to keep contact with my family (...) to keep the relationships going.”*

Interestingly, whilst the narrative accounts produced by familial estrangers explicitly locate the family as being problematic, the accounts produced by familial estrangees, appear also to do so but less directly. Jennifer describes that *“right through her childhood (...) mum and dad were always fighting”*, similarly Heather suggests

that “*we had (...) a good family life except for his alcoholism*”, and Jane admits that “*things were difficult, tense*”.

Significantly, the difference between the accounts of familial estrangers and estrangees, is the position in which the speakers are located and the differing power games this reflects. Whilst estrangers are actively oppressed, estrangees are located in the seemingly powerful positions as the family keepers, the glues and the peace makers. Their power and agency over these positions is apparently further evidenced in their repeated use of the word ‘I’ as though positing a sense of ownership of, responsibility for and autonomy over those roles (Burr, 2003). In spite of these inferred difficulties, participants’ insistence of themselves, from their memories, as family keepers and Heather’s particular insistence that despite her husband’s infidelity and alcoholism “*we had a good (...) family life*”, appear to demonstrate the way in which estrangees existed in the midst of familial problems but - having possibly become subject to grand discourses about families sticking together – were in denial. Moreover, unlike the estrangers who presented different constructions of the family, estrangees appear to present a broadly “cohesive” familial narrative. This all may reflect the way in which their membership of that family has subjected them to what Dallos and Draper (2010) and O’Reilly (2014) posit are powerful expectations of what one “should” do to maintain an image of the family being “okay”. It is this web, which perhaps prevented them from recognising the family complexity, dysfunction and discontent at the time.

4.3.2: Subject Position (2) of Estrangees: Abandoned by the family

The turning point for this estrangee narrative arises following the estrangee being “dumped” by family members. In contrast with estrangers who identified the

key defining moment which determined and preceded their act of estrangement, often, this “dumping” appears to have been done evasively with the estrangees only realising that they had been expunged and why, sometime after it had happened. This turning point demonstrates a shifting power dynamic for the participant from that of a powerful, responsible individual in control of maintaining the family, to one who, despite those efforts, becomes an abandoned victim.

Extract 23:

“I hadn’t told him anything um but he [my brother] seemed to accept it.... I’ve only found out since that my brother (...) kind of put an embargo and kind of ordered the whole family, that’s my extended family, not to contact me and he cut me off completely.” (Jane)

Extract 24:

“I rang my step-sister to say something about the will (...) and that’s when they broke the news to me, that dad had changed his will (...) and I’d been almost completely cut out (...). My life just fell apart (...): the man I absolutely adored, could do something like that to me!” (Jennifer)

Extract 25:

“It all culminated when I left some gifts at my parents’ house for her [my sister’s] children for Christmas and birthdays and she returned them; and that’s when I realised that it was going to be hard to come back after that, but I’ve tried since.” (Paula)

Extract 26:

“I talked to my ex-husband and I said, give me their address and he said, “oh they’ll kill me if I give their address to you or phone number”, I thought, God, there’s people on death row and their kids come and see them. I couldn’t figure it out.... I knew where Shelley [my daughter] worked so I phoned her at work; sent her a letter; no response (...) then I phoned her a second time because it was her birthday and she said, “I don’t want to talk to you.” (Heather)

As the narrative turns, participants begin to utilise discourse which exhibits an “awakening” from the myths in which their lives had been previously engulfed. For example, Jane depicts a realisation that her brother, who she thought had accepted some recent changes in her life, had actually *“ordered the whole family (...) not to contact her; and he cut her off completely”*. Similarly, Jennifer describes the shock she experienced on realising, after her father’s death that she had *“been almost completely cut out”* of his will. Suddenly, his cold, distant manner and lack of contact before he died made “sense” and her *“life just fell apart”* as she realises that the *“man she absolutely adored”* had estranged himself from her. Paula, likewise, was unaware that her relationship with her sister was falling apart and describes the sudden rejection she encountered when her sister simply *“returned”* the presents she had left for her children at their parents’ house. Finally, as Heather constructs bewilderment at her daughters’ refusal to have contact with her, likewise contending that these estrangements were unexpected and evasively enforced. Yet, it is possible, from a discursive perspective, that the presumption of having been the active guardian of the family, inhibited acceptance of this new reality that neither the role of guardian nor

acceptance by the family of being guarded were grounded in reality. This ambiguity seems to further legitimise the position of an estrangee as an abandoned victim.

According to both Sterponi (2009) and O'Reilly (2014), when individuals experience familial ruptures, attempts to "*mitigate or deny any moral charge associated with it*" (O'Reilly, 2014, p. 164) are evident in their talk. By presenting accounts in which they are positioned as family keepers, these participants become distanced from the family's "failings", i.e. estrangement. Although not the focus of this analysis, from a discursive psychology (DP) perspective (Edwards & Potter, 1992), this could raise questions about an active desire to minimise accountability for the estrangement. However, from a Foucauldian perspective, it exposes the tenuousness of power as the individual who was initially presented as powerful, responsible and in control, ultimately, is the one who becomes abandoned.

Initially, the family keeper is presented as being deeply embedded within, and a central figure in, the family clan. The turning point of this estrangee narrative, by contrast, locates them being expunged from the clan, seen as different and alone. For example, Jennifer explains that out of her siblings, she was the only one removed from her father's will; and Jane describes being expunged from her entire "*extended family*." Contrary to extant monolithic narratives about an inherent and unbreakable familial love and bond (Miall, 1989), these accounts highlight the fragility of the family. Furthermore, when Jennifer explains that her father's treatment of her caused her life to fall "*apart*", and Paula describes continuing to "*try*" following her sister's snub, despite knowing that it would be "*hard to come back after that*", they display their perplexity upon realising that the cultural norms and position to which they had previously been conditioned, were mythical.

4.3.3: Subject Position (3) of Estrangees: Realising the family myth yet grieving the family lost

The dénouement of familial estranee narratives represents the way in which participants are left negotiating the “liminal” space (Rohr, 2002) between coming to terms with and accepting their experiences, (i.e. the myth of the family and their presumed role within the family), whilst still grieving for the family (real or not) that they have lost.

Extract 27:

“I don’t want people like that in my life, of course I don’t, which is why I wouldn’t have any friends you know. I don’t have any friends like that but it’s my family, you know and they’ve done it to me. ... I always use this analogy actually. My sister bakes cakes and makes tea when the hunt comes to the village and I’m the hunt saboteur, that’s the difference ; that’s the extremes within one family and unfortunately, that’s who my sister and brother are; so they’re not going to want to know somebody like me. That’s where I am. I’m an embarrassment to them, but I’m so glad I’m me and not them.” (Paula)

Extract 28:

“We all are having to protect ourselves from what mum and dad did; and if we are connected together, that brings those other hurts back and we’re all in a slightly different place and have to find a way of dealing with it.... You never do get over it in that sense ; it doesn’t go away; somebody hated you that much and two people still alive still don’t like you, and that’s very hard (...): but I am a happier, better person and in a better place and sometimes I think, thank god he did it.” (Jennifer)

Extract 29:

“I’ve been shocked actually how the family has expunged me really.... There’s a beautiful phrase I picked up in the literature which is “It’s not the family we live with, it’s the family we live by”, so everybody’s got this notion, this ideological notion about families; and biology is very much involved in that but that’s not often the reality; but it’s very powerful; (...) but I suppose it’s just like any group; if you don’t conform with the group norms, you get thrown out of the group and that’s probably what’s happened to me.” (Jane)

Extract 30:

“I always wanted a family because I didn’t have much of one myself.... I have this feeling you know, we should all get together for a meal and sit down and talk everything out but, I think, society has gotten so busy (...) It’s made me realise the family has changed (...); they’re going in all different directions, just trying to survive and, I suppose, just don’t need each other anymore.... And I’ve come to terms with that.” (Heather)

Diverging from the initial upholding of cultural norms about family cohesiveness and keeping the family together, the extracts above present participants’ eventual “acknowledgement” of their families’ shortcomings. According to Deary (in Sutton, 2017) there is an ambiguity and disorientation which occurs when “*the old self-narrative does not fit any longer*” (p. 14); and individuals become situated in a space in which they must attempt to create new, more fitting narratives (Stenner, 2013). In these extracts, the participants appear to mobilise shifting accounts of the

family and of their position within it. For example, despite having always wanted a close family of her own, Heather explains that she has “*come to terms with*” the idea that the “*family has changed.*”

Jennifer, who was initially positioned as seemingly powerful, in control of and responsible for maintaining the family dynamics, now concedes that she and her siblings are all “*having to protect ourselves from what mum and dad did*”, thereby seemingly shifting that responsibility from herself to her parents. Paula likewise admits that despite initially thinking she was the “*peace maker*”, she has come to recognise that “*my sister bakes cakes and makes tea when the hunt comes to the village and I’m the hunt saboteur, that’s the difference; that’s the extremes within one family*”. This confirms that there is a demonstrable difference and divide within the family. Finally, Jane advances the concepts of in/out group relatedness (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to re-construct her family narrative by explaining that “*everybody’s got this notion, this ideological notion about families (...); it’s very powerful (...); but I suppose it’s just like any group; if you don’t conform with the group norms, you get thrown out of the group; and that’s probably what’s happened to me*”. Being located as the peace makers and family keepers also arguably positions the participants as being different from the rest of their dysfunctional family. Moreover, when relating that, for example, “*they’ve done it to me*” (Paula), these participants (again) become positioned not only as different, but as victims. This seems to legitimise their current circumstances by explaining why they have become abandoned.

Paradoxically, these reconstructed accounts of family, appear to release sentiments of happiness and acceptance. For example, Jennifer states that “*I am a happier, better person and in a better place and sometimes I think, thank God he did it*” and similarly, Paula explains that she doesn’t “*want people like that in my life*”

and is *“so glad I’m me and not them.”* Meanwhile, Heather presents a sense of acceptance when she states that she has had to *“come to terms with”* the idea that *“society”* and the *“family”* have changed.

The participants, however, continue to appear somewhat bound to the cultural norms of the family to which they were previously subject; and this seems to also constrain their reported happiness and acceptance. Thus, as Jane retorts that she is still *“shocked actually how the family has expunged me”*; Paula explains that she wouldn’t *“have any friends like that but it’s my family, you know and they’ve done it to me”*; and Jennifer reasons that *“you never do get over it in that sense, it doesn’t go away; somebody hated you that much and two people still alive still don’t like you”*. The dénouement of the familial estrangee narratives closes with a sense that these participants remain stuck negotiating their ambivalence, disappointment, shock and sadness about being abandoned; and still being pained by their ongoing grief about losing their families.

4.4: Questioning the binaries

Whilst the dichotomous trajectories of estranger and estrangee were predominantly evident in individuals’ talk, on closer re-examination, many of these accounts also contained elements that unsettled these simple binary distinctions. They indicated that some participants were also talking from a different discursive stance - a finding which is of interest in this analysis. The distinctiveness of these accounts was doubly evident in participants’ questioning: firstly, in their critical appraisal of their families as ambiguous; secondly although some left and others were left, in how they mobilised these accounts in less rigidly binaried categories. They seemed instead to be more appreciative of the nuances of possible meanings and were more

questioning of the influences of circulating cultural norms. This position seemed to enable them to resolve their experiences by developing an empowering perspective which helped them to get “over” the experience of familial estrangement, and be flexible about representations of the family. The introduction of new extracts and the re-examination of previously used ones, offers new perspectives which demonstrate how the previous binary distinctions have been disrupted.

4.4.1: Subject position (1) of Questioning the Binaries: Ambiguous families: questioning the normality of the family

Extract 31:

“I started to question it [my upbringing and my relationship with them now] and I don’t think it was or was ever going to be a normal family relationship unless it was on their terms, you know - if you went to the same church and aspired to the sort of life they lived.” (Damian)

Extract 32:

“He is my father and I am his daughter, but he’s not my parent and I’m not his child. Does that make sense? Yeah, I don’t think he was ever a normal parent so how could I ever be a normal child?” (Rebecca)

These extracts, along with extracts 33-34 presented below, demonstrate two key ways in which participants appear to present their familial relationships as having been distant and ambiguous. Firstly, Damian and Rebecca do so by questioning the family dynamics. For example, this is seen when Damian explicitly suggests that he

began to “question” whether his had ever been “a normal family relationship”. Similarly, Rebecca ponders over the “normality” of her relationship with her father. This questioning creates a sense of these relationships being obscure, vague and incomplete.

Extract 33:

“My mother has always been very, very difficult. My dad was always the one that I went to if I fell over; it was never ever my mum (...) so I never confided in my mother with anything. I’ve never spoken to her about my worries or concerns.... We always had a fairly distant relationship.” (Lucy)

Extract 34:

“The relationship with my sister (...) has never been a normal relationship. We wouldn’t ring each other, other than probably Christmas; we wouldn’t speak to each other, other than when we were in [seaside town] together; so when we spoke or were in the same space, we would muddle along and it would be fine but, um, I wouldn’t turn to her and she wouldn’t turn to me.” (Ryan)

Lucy and Ryan similarly construct their familial relationships as being non-normative. However, unlike Damian and Rebecca, they offer these as statements of truth, rather than a questioning. Lucy explains that *“if I fell over, it was never my mum (...) I never confided in my mother with anything. I’ve never spoken to her about my worries or concerns”*. Whilst Ryan describes a relationship with his sister where they *“wouldn’t ring each other, other than probably Christmas (...) when we spoke or were in the same space, we would muddle along... but, um, I wouldn’t turn to her and she*

wouldn't turn to me." These descriptions appear to construct notions of "normal" family relationships, with Lucy and Ryan subsequently contrasting (Dickerson, 2000) their own. This thus seems to position the family as "abnormal" and consequently, legitimises estrangement.

The relativity of normality is of interest in post-structuralist research, particularly to Foucauldian analysts, who have questioned the way in which mutable constructions of normal vs. deviant have been utilised as a means through which power and control may be exerted (Smith, 1978; Sarup, 1993). The four extracts above appear to exemplify ways in which these participants have been bound by conventional regulatory assumptions and truth claims about what family relationships "should" be like. This regulatory binding appears to make anything opposing these truth claims ambiguous and thus, difficult to conceptualise as anything other than "not normal". This also appears to be in line with research conducted by Baxter et al. (2009) which illuminated the ways in which grand narratives have the power to infiltrate our own personal narratives so that in constructing these, we also resource broader – even if opposing – conventions.

Unlike the initial narrative position of the estrangees and estrangers, however, participants here do not appear to speak from either side of a discursive position (i.e. powerful or oppressed): instead, they seem dislocated and to adopt more neutral and ambiguous positions than those of the previous estranger/estrangee. Furthermore, it seems to place the participants in a flexible location, more conducive to the unfolding of their narrative.

4.4.2: Subject Position (2) of Questioning the Binaries: Abandoned and abandoning

Having considered the family as ambiguous, the turning point of this narrative account construes the experience of estrangement not as having clearly defined categories of participation but instead, as ambiguous as the family itself.

Extract 35:

“It’s kind of complicated because in reality he was never really there, so it’s like he estranged himself from me long before (...) it’s just that I actually said it, I called it.”

(Rebecca)

Extract 36:

“I suppose in some ways it was instigated by me because in my late teens, I moved away from the north-west and came down here for work. I sort of found a life for myself really. We weren’t ever really close so there wasn’t any great call to go back (...); there was never really a great deal of contact from them and I think there came a point really where I decided that it was me that was doing all the contacting and I thought well if I don’t, let’s see what happens and there was no contact.” (Damian)

The extracts above portray the potential ambiguity of an estrangement. These first two extracts were taken from the individuals’ accounts in which a predominant estranger trajectory had emerged. Rebecca appears to proclaim her estranging agency through the claim *“I actually said it, I called it”*, yet, she also concedes, that her father *“was never really there”*; explaining that because of this it was *“like he estranged himself from me long before”* her act of estrangement. Similarly, Damian is positioned

as the active stranger when he explains that *“it was instigated by me”*; however he also states that, *“there was never really a great deal of contact from them”*. Thus, despite having claimed to be the instigators of their estrangements, here, attention can also be drawn to the estranging other, a focus which questions the conclusiveness of binaried categories of stranger or estranged.

Extract 37:

“I thought, god, there’s people on death row and their kids come and see them (...) the first phone call, she said “mum, I love you but you left us”. Then I phoned her a second time because it was her birthday (...) she said “uh, I don’t want to talk to you” and that was it.” (Heather)

Heather’s narrative was identifiable initially as one of an estranged, through her reporting of her daughter’s claim, *“I don’t want to talk to you.”* However, it’s interesting, that this discursive positioning comes immediately after Heather also explains that her daughter told her, *“mum, I love you, but you left us”*. If the first quote was to be taken in isolation, one could view Heather as someone whose children abandoned her, and yet, when taken collectively, we are introduced to another possibility, namely that of Heather having previously done the abandoning.

Extract 38:

“She never asked how I was doing really...she just wasn’t interested so I just stop bothering [to make contact] (...) about 6 weeks after my birthday, I got a letter from her saying what a disappointment I was and how she’d realised what a long time it was since I’d called or spoken to her. So I wrote her a letter back (...) and then I tried

to call her, it went to voicemail several times and then I got a phone call from my aunt to say that my mother had contacted and written to every member of the family including a copy of her letter and a copy of my letter telling them how shocked and disgusted by my behaviour she was.... She also sent out a letter to all of the family saying (...) no one was allowed to have anything to do with me” (Lucy)

Importantly, this final extract was taken from the narrative account of an individual where neither an estranger nor an estrangee trajectory could be coherently located. Instead, what unfolded was a narrative in which the speaker was seemingly dislocated somewhere between these two categories. Moreover, Lucy explains that her mother’s apparent disinterest in her made her “*stop bothering*” to make contact - one potential act of estranging which appears to have coincided with her mother’s public disownment of her.

Useful and coherent definitions of what estrangement is, the categories of which it comprises (i.e. physical and emotional) and the parties involved have been offered by researchers such as Agllias (2011; 2013; 2017). Importantly however, she also contends that the distinctions between these categories can at times become blurred (Agllias, 2017). The extracts presented above, further evidence the complex and problematic discursive nature of estrangement and questions the notion of a universally dichotomous construct. Importantly, it is possible that the familial ambiguity which was constructed by participants in their initial position, enables participants to construct their estrangements, as has been demonstrated here, with greater fluidity. This is of particular interest in this analysis and perhaps also for the CoP working with an estranged individual and their experiences of the family.

4.4.3: Subject Position (3) of Questioning the Binaries: What is a family, anyway?

In this dénouement, participants' talk seems to contain an empowered stance from which, with reflexivity and fluidity, a meta-critical perspective on experiences of the family and familial estrangement is created. The speakers appear to resource this position in multiple, nuanced ways and so, in order to explore each coherently, commentary will be offered after each extract.

Extract 39:

"I think I always knew it was an illusion at some level. I've only recently begun to understand the depth of that illusion and the consequences of it. I guess, I guess families are an illusion, whether they're working well or not working well um, because, they're only as real as the intent of the people that are in them I suppose. Yeah, that's interesting, they're not really concrete are they? They're fluid: they're only family because we say it's a family. If he'd disappeared and had never come back when I was a baby, we would have still been a family. (Rebecca)"

This extract can be multiply interpreted. Rebecca's introduction of the family as an "*illusion*" could, from a psychodynamic perspective, demonstrate an adopted "defence" (Parker, 1992) against the difficulties and pains of familial estrangement. Many of these narratives could be similarly interpreted. However, from a post-structuralist stance, Rebecca appears to be offering a critique on the assumptions about truth commonly held about the family. This is particularly demonstrated through words such as "*illusion*" and "*fluid*" as well as Rebecca's assertion that families are "*only as real as the intent of the people that are in them*", in so doing, she appears to

be discursively deconstructing grand narratives about the family as a naturally cohesive, stable and universal group.

Interestingly and of significance, however, is the instability of this meta-positioning, as Rebecca rapidly moves from this position and back into a “realist” perspective of the family when she goes onto say “*if he’d disappeared and had never come back when I was a baby, we would have still been a family*”. Rebecca’s ability to reach this meta-positioning is of particular interest in demonstrating the way in which grand narratives and their regulatory power can be critiqued and dismantled. However, especially for the practitioner working with estrangement and the family, it is important to also highlight the way in which we navigate this terrain, given our tendencies to evacuate and inhibit such narratives.

Extract 40:

“I think you sort of, find where you, find where you need to be in life and if your family can provide that it’s fine; but if they don’t, you can find that elsewhere so it’s, I don’t really think that the whole sort of Eastenders’ family is important.” (Damian)

Damian proposes that in finding where you “*need to be in life*”, “*if your family can provide that it’s fine but if they don’t, you can find that elsewhere*”. In so doing, he offers a notion of family which contravenes the conventionality of the natural and universal human group which is expected to provide the individual with all they need to live a fulfilling life (Murdock, 1968; Davidoff et al., 1999; Taylor, 2012). His reference to the iconic “*Eastenders’ family*” is interesting for a number of reasons, two of which are given below. First, Eastenders is a popular TV show and one which research has shown (Family and Parenting Institute, 2002; Mount, 2012), often

conjures up images of repeated portrayals of unquestioning family loyalty, in spite of extreme tumultuousness, thus, perpetuating the notion that “families should stick together”. Second, this is a fictional show and so, Damian’s referencing it also provides scope for dismissal of the notion of family unity and loyalty.

Extract 41:

[Relaying a conversation between herself and her friend] *“She’d say to me “Heather, for God’s sake, you go at Christmas; the guy’s sitting there watching football; they’re fighting; you’re in the kitchen exhausted”; so you build up, I built up this fantasy world of this perfect family, you know.... I think that fantasy helps us survive.”*
(Heather)

Heather appears to deconstruct this notion of the family as an idyllic safe-haven (Elliot, 1986; Davidoff et al., 1999; Dallos & Draper, 2010) when she instead analyses its chaos. Christmas is predominantly held in society as a time for family to gather together in the spirit of merriment, compassion and harmony (Páez, Bilbao, Bobowik, Campos & Basabe 2011); and so in drawing on this to mobilise her construction, Heather further appears to deconstruct these notions of idealism.

As Heather suggests that *“fantasy helps us survive”*, it is unclear whether she means us – human beings/individuals or us – “the family” or perhaps, she means both. However, in doing so, she seemingly creates an impression that fantasy helps to protect the family against “reality” and perhaps, introduces an interesting argument that the perpetuation of such fanciful grand narratives, plays a significant role in our/society’s survival.

Extract 42:

“There’s a beautiful phrase I picked up in the literature which is um, ‘it’s not the family we live with, it’s the family we live by’. So, everybody’s got this notion, this ideological notion about families, and biology is very much involved in that but that’s not often the reality: but it’s a very powerful, biological influence but I suppose it’s like any group, if you don’t conform with the group norms you get thrown out of the group and that’s probably what’s happened to me. So, family is a unit, with a kind of shifting, like all groups. A few people coming in and a few people departing into death; and it’s a loose structure but it’s held together by this common notion of biology, I suppose but it’s got all the characteristics of a group.” (Jane)

This extract presents an interesting and nuanced critique of the family and of Jane’s meta-positioning to it. Jane offers a conventional view about the family and the powerful “*biological influence*” associated with this view. In stating that this view is one held by “*everybody*” she further legitimises her claim of this understanding being normative (Dickerson, 1997). However, she subsequently offers a juxtaposition by stating “*but I suppose it’s like any group, if you don’t conform with the group norms you get thrown out of the group.*” In so doing, she appears to question what Miall (1989) highlights as public opinion - an unbreakable familial love and bond due to biology; and instead, introduces the mutability of the family as a social group.

Throughout, Jane also appears to expose the, often subtle, regulatory power which the family exerts. This is demonstrated, for example when she states that “*it’s not the family we live with, it’s the family we live by*” and that this biological influence is “*very powerful*”. This exposure along with her apparent recognitions of the contradictions and complexities of families as social constructs, appear to position

Jane as being wise to the myths and realities of the family and as being above them in a critical reflexive meta-position.

Extract 43:

“I do have a normal family. I have elements I am estranged from.... Normal for me is people who, it’s like friends, it’s the same thing. Family is held together by blood, that’s there but it’s also the fact that they like each other and they want to do things together and they’re happy in each other’s company and they’re safe in each other’s company and I have that, I have that with all the family that I’m not estranged from.”

(Ryan)

In this extract, Ryan appears to dissect notions on the family. Firstly, he introduces the normative view (Andersen, 1991; Baxter, Norwood, Asbury & Scharp, 2014) of the family as being *“held together by blood”*. Subsequently, presenting the family as mutable and transactional (Morgan, 1996; 1999; Baxter et al., 2009), i.e. *“like each other and they want to do things together”*. This seems to dually place the family as a construct consisting of individuals chosen by blood but sometimes modified by preference. Establishing this mutability and variability of the family, enables it to be located flexibly as being both good and bad, both restrictive and permitting (Taylor, 2012). Ryan’s claimed knowledge of this, like Jane, consequently appears to position him in a critical reflexive meta-position in relation to the family.

Like Rebecca, Ryan alternates between inhabiting and evacuating this meta-position. When he says, *“I do have a normal family”*, he inhabits the normal family construct. However, in explaining that families *“like each other and they want to do things together and they’re happy in each other’s company and they’re safe in each*

other's company and I have that. I have that with all the family that I'm not estranged from", he seemingly also evacuates this construct by offering a critique on family. This critique, however, does not appear to be on family exclusively but rather, is specifically on his family of origin, positioning it by contrast as unsafe and unhappy. In so doing, Ryan legitimises his estrangement from a family that was "not normal"

These five preceding extracts showcase different constructions on the family, e.g. family by blood vs. by choice, further highlighting its mutability as a construct. This fluidity appears to enable familial estrangement to be constructed in a more nuanced and less binaried way than the estranger/estrangee trajectories outlined previously. In so doing, participants appear neither angry towards nor rejecting of notions about the family; nor do they seem to be stuck longing or grieving for the family lost. Instead, they appear to be located as positively accepting of the mutability of the family and thus, its good, its bad, its ugly and its beauty. This meta-positioning, appears to enable them to traverse a more flexible and empowering construction of familial estrangement, an observation which is of particular relevance to CoPs.

4.5: Summary of Results and Concluding Remarks

With the application of the FNA to the transcripts of eleven individuals, this study has aimed to answer the research question "*how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?*" The findings presented above propose that adults construct their experiences of familial estrangement in multiple and varied ways. Most predominantly, two dichotomous trajectories, namely familial estranger and familial estrangee appeared in participants' talk. However, a third trajectory also emerged. Located within each of the previous two trajectories, the third trajectory, "questioning

the binaries” served to unsettle the exclusivity of the dichotomy in the previous narratives. These multiple constructions appeared to position those involved in distinct sets of discursive power relations. In contrast to the purportedly clear cut divisions of familial estranger and familial estrangee, this third trajectory presented more nuanced and ambiguous constructions of the family, and thus of familial estrangement, as being equally complex and ambiguous.

As CoPs, we, like anyone else, are susceptible to discursive truth claims; and this is, perhaps, especially true of those about the family. The findings presented throughout this chapter are intended to remind CoPs and other therapeutic practitioners that the family and its normative constructions hold a formidable social regulatory power over individuals but that this power can be unsettled and critiqued.

Firstly, participants who produced an estranger narrative did so by constructing and subsequently problematising the oppressive nature of this regulatory power. Their narratives demonstrated how, through various turning points, their estrangement was discursively enabled and legitimised, consequently dismantling the regulatory power to which they were previously subject. Contrary to estranger narratives, estrangees commenced from a position of power, reified by cultural grand narratives about families sticking together. A loyalty to this belief, however, seemed to limit their recognition of the family discord and on finding themselves abandoned, they were forced to reconsider their conceptualisations of the family. Finally, it became evident that some participants also spoke from a more nuanced position. In questioning what the family is, they seemed able to conceptualise its construction as ambiguous and fluid, rather than fixed and certain. This conceptualisation of family appeared to enable a more critical meta-position about family and, furthermore, of familial estrangement.

It is hoped that, following these findings, the CoP working with estranged individuals may be encouraged to look, look again and look differently at how experiences of familial estrangement are narrated and to question what this demonstrates about what a family is and the importance of being a member of a family.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Discussion

“The scholar’s task is not to get it ‘right about the nature of the world’, but to generate understandings that may open new paths to action.”

Gergen (2009, p. 81)

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five

This final chapter discusses the findings explored in Chapter Four which address the research question; *“how do adults construct experiences of familial estrangement?”* These findings are one reading of many possible from the narrative accounts provided by eleven volunteer participants. Following the FNA, familial estrangement is shown to be constructed in multiple and diverse ways positioning those involved in distinct sets of discursive power relations of empowerment or enfeeblement.

As Brown (2007) suggests, the effective therapeutic practitioner is one who has knowledge but also, who recognises the effects of power. These results are therefore of particular interest to CoPs and other therapeutic practitioners, as they present the family as complex, mutable and not always the safe-haven (Elliot, 1986; Kradin, 2009; Dallos & Draper, 2010) that normative social regulatory discourses would have us believe it is. Therefore, this reading also offers a critique of contemporary assumptions about the family.

In line with the post-structuralist epistemological stance adopted in this study, no claims are made about the materiality of these findings; instead, what is offered is

a discursive commentary on the varied power games operating in the specific accounts offered by these participants.

In this chapter I will firstly consider the impact of this study's findings on therapeutic knowledges of relevance to CoPs and by inference, to therapeutic practitioners generally. Secondly, I will evaluate the method and methodology applied to address this subject, and will comment on my reflexivity as the CoP researcher. Informed by the findings produced, I will offer some recommendations for future research in this area. Finally, I will summarise the main contribution of this study in its overall conclusions, particularly for therapeutic practitioners working with clients who present with issues from their families of origin.

5.2: The Research Findings and their Possible Contributions to Counselling Psychology

The main contribution of this thesis is that it aims to offer a critical resource for CoPs, allowing them to be aware of the discursive power games evident within people's narratives on familial estrangement. This has been achieved firstly in Chapter One, where a rationale for this study was provided. Secondly, in Chapter Two, where a genealogy - which critically reviewed the knowledges surrounding the family and family estrangement in western society - was presented to support the rationale for this study. This then highlighted the need for an analysis of family estrangement, to make visible the nuanced complexities and power-laden discourses about the experience of family membership and of family estrangement. It is hoped that this analysis will unsettle some of the popular contemporary assumptions about the family, and provide a space for further reflection, in order to sensitise others to the complexities of familial estrangement and of the family.

The analysis presented in Chapter Four produced two aspects of analytic interest. Firstly, the identification of three narrative trajectories. Secondly, three sets of identified subject positions were identified within each narrative trajectory, highlighting diverse discursive power relations. These results will be discussed here in relation to their implications for counselling psychology, and their impact on related literatures on familial estrangement.

5.2.1: The Narrative Trajectories

The first key finding illustrated that familial estrangement could be variously and flexibly constructed and understood in storied accounts from the protagonist positions of estranger, estrangee or an evacuation of those positions. This complexity is not uncommon as has also been shown in other studies investigating the discursive practices and narrative accounts of personal experiences in other social domains (Riessman, 1993; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Tamboukou, 2013). In this particular study, one finding demonstrated how estrangement may be narrated as a varied (rather than fixed) experience, reflecting participants' discursive movement through those accounts. Such a finding might be particularly pertinent to CoPs working with estranged clients who may go through a similar process of evolution and change.

The two predominant trajectories to emerge from the participants recruited for this study were of estranger and estrangee. These trajectories showcased, not only the "competing" narratives (Tamboukou, 2013) of this phenomenon, but also highlighted various differences and complexities in the familial dynamics and memberships. An individual reading or listening to these accounts might be inclined to conclude that these dichotomies are a statement of reality. Moreover, the therapeutic practitioner working with an estranged individual, particularly whilst operating with a humanistic

and phenomenological philosophy (Risq, 2007; Woolfe et al., 2010), might conceivably apply this conclusion to their therapeutic approach. From a discursive perspective however, categories and categorisation can be understood as practices which serve to construct relationships and events (Sacks, 1992); and to provide a transient order for a given moment (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Moreover, Foucault (1982) problematised “dividing practices”, such as categorisation, arguing that it might work to “*qualify or disqualify people as fit and proper members of the social order*” (Foucault, 1965; Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). As suggested in Chapter Two, a prominent social regulatory power exists within family, therefore, prejudicial implications might be associated with the categorisation of an individual as an “estranger” or “estranged.”

Significantly, the third trajectory, questioning the binaries, added another analytic layer to these narrative accounts. Located in the talk of both estrangers and estrangeds, it unsettled the previously established dichotomous trajectories by presenting familial estrangement, not as a coherent and neatly categorised experience, but instead as a complex and ambiguously constructed one. This result further highlighted the importance of viewing the initial dichotomous representations as a transient medium through which an individual’s subjectivity could be captured within a particular moment, but not as an objective truth claim. This finding is especially pertinent to CoPs working with estranged individuals, because it reminds them to remain similarly anticipating of and receptive to these nuances and what may at times appear within narrative accounts, as contradictions.

5.2.2: The Subject Positions

The second main finding made visible, diverse subject positions, within each narrative trajectory. These positions located those involved in distinct power relations of empowerment or enfeeblement in relation to the family and familial estrangement; however, such positions might also be relevant to other areas of psychological experience, particularly those which are traumatic and disruptive. From a post-structuralist stance then, identities are not to be understood as deterministic, simplistic or constant; instead, they are variable and flexible (Burr, 2003; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Murray, 2015). Moreover, according to Foucault (1982), subjectivity is positioned and repeatedly repositioned through talk and, consequently, the self is constantly changing. The data reflected this mutability and indicated how individuals were multiply positioned in fluctuating power dynamics, within their competing narratives about familial estrangement.

Besley (2001) argued that narrative therapy challenges and facilitates a re-evaluation of dominant and unquestioned truths. In so doing, it can destabilise the positions to which clients find themselves subject. Likewise, in identifying the discursive subjectivities present in the study, the analysis has produced a critical lens through which CoPs can explore estranged individuals'/clients' talk and interrogate what their truth claims might enable or constrain. Foucault (2001) suggested that *"while the human subject is placed in relations of production and signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex"* (pp. 326-327). The subject positions explored within this analysis, highlighted varying power dynamics, and participants' tendencies to alternately inhabit and evacuate these, thus further demonstrating the complexities of power relations.

In conjunction with the finding examined in 5.2.1, CoPs may wish to consider how their clients' narratives showcase the many varying positions of power and the impact this may have on clients' clinical presentations and wellbeing (White, 1995; Besley, 2001). This reinforces the need for CoPs, rather than complacently accepting and being colonised by grand discourses and narratives, to have a critical meta-awareness of them, particularly of those co-created within the therapeutic encounter. Specifically, it underscores a need to be sensitive to the power found in language and the ways that this serves to construct clients' subjectivities (Parritt, 2016).

5.2.3: Impact on Literatures related to the Family and Family Estrangement:

In Chapter One, I introduced the role which discourse and narratives play in exerting and maintaining power (Foucault, 1982; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In Chapter Two, I introduced the dominant extant knowledges which serve to perpetuate powerful grand discourses about the family and in which, alternative discourses have been largely overlooked (Kradin, 2009). This study has sought to explore the marginalised discourse of familial estrangement. In so doing, it has also been a project of deconstruction (Crossley, 2000). The narrative trajectories examined, further appeared to highlight the ways in which a family could be multiply worked up through talk; and consequently served to deconstruct storied experiences of family membership. This finding importantly highlights the family as a mutable social construct and not, as Foucault argued, as providing an enlightened and assured understanding of the "*best way to deal with certain facts about human nature*" (Taylor, 2012, p. 215). Instead, according to Foucault, our knowledge about the family "*exists as it does as the result of power struggles in which certain people lost and whose histories of resistance have been forgotten.*" (Taylor, 2012, p. 215).

The three narrative trajectories discussed here also demonstrate the way in which our knowledges about the family have changed and through which, differing stories of resistance have emerged. In Chapter Two, examinations of pre-contemporary understandings of estrangement highlighted it as something which is “done to” another out of familial and societal duty. By contrast, the accounts produced here, constructed estrangement, broadly, as something which occurs when familial relationships are not meaningful, fulfilling and nurturing. This is perhaps indicative of the changing nature of family and family membership, and reinforces the importance of therapeutic practitioners unconditionally exploring this openly and critically with their clients.

The identification of these varied narrative trajectories as well as the distinct and nuanced subject positions, contributes further to the empirical literature on familial estrangement and, specifically, to prospective areas of analytic interest as highlighted by Robinson (2011) and Scharp (2014).

Furthermore, many studies on estrangement have opted to follow an interpretive-constructivist epistemology (Robinson, 2011; Agllias, 2013) and in some cases, (e.g. Agllias & Gray, 2013), a more critical approach has been adopted. The use of a post-structuralist epistemology encompassing Foucault’s ideas on power, has sought to examine the experience of familial estrangement in a new and different way; and in so doing, provide alternative explorations, discussions and narratives on the family, through the eyes of the estranged. Authors have noted (Vetere & Dowling, 2005; O’Reilly, 2014) that it can be difficult to talk about familial difficulties and differences in clinical contexts. By providing an alternative gaze on family and family membership, this research therefore aims to highlight to CoPs, the need to unreservedly explore and be sensitive to the multiple ways in which the family may

be constructed: moreover, to be cognisant of the power games inherent within these constructions and to which they and their clients might unwittingly become subject.

5.2.4: Implications on Counselling Psychology Practice

In the preceding sections, the researcher has aimed to introduce and explore some of the ways in which the findings of this thesis might influence and resource CoPs. This section will seek to expand upon what has been introduced, considering, specifically, the implications of these findings on CoPs' clinical approach and practice.

Familial estrangement, it has been discussed, has typically been a marginalised topic. This may mean, as highlighted by Dattilio and Nichols (2011), that individuals with experiences of familial estrangement, might not be forthcoming in discussing them in the therapeutic setting. This study has aimed to provide CoPs with a critical resource about experiences of estrangement; a resource which, it is hoped, might be instructive in their working with an estranged individual. What is also important to highlight, however, is that because of this marginalisation and the stigma attached to experiences of estrangement (Agllias, 2017), the onus may fall on the practitioner to directly encourage a discussion about and exploration of these experiences. Agllias (2017) has proposed that in routine assessments, the therapeutic practitioner should seek to explore the complexities of familial experiences. Specifically, she suggests that asking questions which directly "normalise" the potential for emotional and physical estrangements within families and that explore the impact of variations and complexities in family relationships on the individual. In doing so, drawing on the findings of this thesis, the CoP might also wish to be particularly mindful and ironic to the language used to depict these relationships. For example, if a client stated that

their relationship with their siblings was “just a normal sibling relationship”, the CoP might want to respond, for example, by saying “when you say normal, I’m just wondering exactly what that word means to you?”. Likewise, if a client explains that their relationship with their parents was “not perfect”, the CoP might wish to ask, for example, “what is your impression of the perfect parent-child relationship and how has yours differed?” Facilitating discussions in this way, might enable a more open, reflective and appropriately critical examination of the family and of an individual’s experience of their family – whether a specific familial estrangement exists or not.

It has already been highlighted that individuals’ narrative constructions of familial estrangement are varied and within them, they become diversely positioned. This variability and diversity, may present estrangement as a particularly complex experience – difficult to negotiate and “recover” from psychologically and emotionally. Crossley (2000) explores that in order to assist individuals’ recovery from particularly painful and complex psychological and emotional experiences, the development of a “healing” narrative must be prioritised. This involves deconstructing the previously harmful, conflicting, oppressive and/or incoherent narratives and reconstructing a narrative which features integration, empowerment, agency and adaptation. White and Epston (1999) suggest that approaches such as narrative therapy can enable clients to develop their alternative, at times opposing, stories and the connections between them (Tamboukou, 2013); and to therapeutically access different modes of power (Brown, 2007). This approach, it is proposed, might be especially beneficial for CoPs to employ when working with clients who present with issues involving family/familial estrangement and might enable a facilitation of the development of a healing narrative.

Finally, Friesen (2003) has noted that familial estrangements have a ripple effect on other relationships. Moreover, Agllias (2017) highlighted the intergenerational impact that estrangements may cause. Bottero (2015) suggested that an individual's family identity and experience of the family is influenced, as Agllias (2017) summarises by "*narratives about the past and present family culture*", narratives which might also convey the "*expectations about continued [family] membership*" (p. 123). Bottero (2015) proposed further, that creating a genealogical understanding of the narratives within an individual's family might illuminate on the enduring and perhaps, conflicting and restrictive, "*knowledges, cultures, values, rituals and narratives*" (Agllias, 2017, p. 123) which may inadvertently replicate experiences of familial estrangement inter-generationally. Attempting to create a genealogical understanding of such family narratives, it is proposed here, might be useful in both individual and family therapy sessions and might assist individuals in gaining a deeper understanding of their familial estrangements and their impact. Moreover, it may offer an insight into the ways in which certain narratives have been harmful and have inadvertently encouraged estrangements and, where possible, may offer individuals with a means through which they might challenge and change these narratives to discontinue the ongoing ripple effects of these estrangements across generations.

5.3: Evaluation of this research

This section aims to evaluate the choice of employing the FNA, and the method adopted to address this research question. The choice of methodology is firstly a limitation itself, as is the case for all research (Willig, 2013; Smith, 2015), because this defines the parameters of visibility and restricts the claims which can be made

about the knowledge produced (Willig, 2013). However, any methodological approach would be similarly enabling and / or constraining. I will now evaluate and critique the limitations of this FNA; and then I will discuss the possible implications of the chosen participant sample group. Finally, I will revisit the issue of researcher reflexivity introduced in Chapter Three to consider and further critique my reflexivity within this post-structural study.

5.3.1: An Evaluation of Foucauldian Narrative Analysis

FNA offers a critical method of exploring the ways, practices and discourses available for human beings to make sense of themselves, their experiences and the world around them (Foucault, 1989; Tamboukou, 2013). Importantly, it assumes an inseparability of knowledge and power and, logically therefore, examines how the truths, knowledges and subjectivities we produce through discourse, as represented in narratives, have come into being (Foucault, 1989). It thus allows a critical analysis of personal narratives within the context of broader (institutional) discourses. Such critical approaches, as Freire (1970) and Souto-Manning (2014) posit, allow researchers the analytic capacity to deconstruct these discourses and to develop a critical meta-awareness.

Despite this potential usefulness, like many narrative and discourse analytic approaches (Riessman, 1993; Willig, 2013), there is a shortage of standardised methodological guidelines for conducting an FNA and so as an approach, it relies heavily on the researcher's subjective interpretations (Wetherell, 1998). As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) explain, different people may see the same issue differently. Some researchers and critics have argued that this flexibility may limit the credibility of a study's findings (Yardley, 2000). However, the notion that there is no

“correct” way of conducting research and no singular truth or knowledge to extract is consistent with a post-structuralist stance (Burr, 2003; Willig, 2013). Moreover, according to Patterson (2003), it is this flexibility which enables analytic approaches such as FNA to appropriately explore the complexities and nuances of lived experience.

Moreover, post-structuralist approaches to research and, arguably, especially Foucauldian analyses, require a level of abstraction, by the researcher, from the truth of or subjective “pain” embedded within a narrative (Crossley, 2000). Whilst this approach can be advantageous to the task of remaining as ironic to and critical of particular concepts and the language being used to construct them (Burr, 2003, Willig, 2013), it has raised some concerns and critiques. One such criticism, as noted by Madill, Jordan and Shirley (2000), is that such an approach maybe considered “*detached and emotionless*” (p. 13) and may in turn, ignore or devalue an individual’s experience as being their truth and “reality”. This raises a particular difficulty for counselling psychologist-researchers, whose professional identity is founded upon humanistic principles of phenomenology and bringing an empathetic understanding and approach to an individual’s experience (Woolfe, et al. 2003; Risq, 2007) - attending to an individual’s “core pain” is something which is arguably, at the heart of such therapeutic work.

Whilst these criticisms should not be dismissed, I find it pertinent to again reflect on the comment by Brown (2007) as shared in Chapter One, that the modern therapeutic encounter should move beyond the simple listening and retelling of clients’ narratives “*to an active deconstruction of oppressive and unhelpful discourses*” (p. 3). As practitioners and researchers, we must therefore negotiate a balance between remaining critical and ironic in settings and situations where such an

approach is required and might be beneficial and informative, whilst, perhaps, also remembering how to apply the knowledge we have gained through this ironic stance, in a way which is respectful of and compassionate towards our clients.

Though intended to enrich the knowledge and awareness of CoPs, another potential limitation of this approach rests in its inability to inform how this might influence therapeutic practice. Dallos and Vetere (2009), for example, comment that narrative approaches are not especially useful for producing generalisable results, or when working towards theoretical application. Similarly, Foucauldian informed research has been criticised for having limited clinical applicability (Avdi & Georgaca, 2007). However, whilst this study has proposed no specific aim, nor made claim to operate within any such positivistic standards of objectivity (Arribas-Allynon & Walkerdine, 2008), it has, instead, been interested in the social construction of and relationship between knowledge and experience.

A third consideration to be critiqued is the underpinning philosophy of this study, that subjectivity can be understood through discourse. As illustrated in Chapter Four, three distinct sets of subject positions appeared in each of the three narrative trajectories. However, some researchers who approach narratives with a psychoanalytic gaze suggest that many important features of human experience escape narrative and cannot be “*storied into sense*” (Squire, 2013, p. 50). Likewise, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) argue that in order to understand the reasons why particular individuals are invested in or attached to specific subject positions, further explanation is required. For this, they employed a psychodynamic approach to make sense of these investments and, for example, to expose hidden anxieties which are conceptualised as underlying narrative structure (Murray, 2015). There is no doubt that such an approach would produce an equally interesting and meaningful contribution to this

particular subject. However, the notion that this might enable a route into the “*logic of the unconscious*” (Squire, 2013, p. 50) could be seen as incongruent with a post-structuralist stance. Moreover, as Davies and Harre (1999) suggest, an individual’s history and experiences are sufficient to provide an explanation behind the attachments to specific positions.

5.3.2: A Critique of the Opportunity Sample

Recruiting participants and producing data via opportunistic sampling has its limitations. It is recognised that the findings produced here are representative of and thus constrained by the contributions of these particular participants, and that other estranged individuals may have provided entirely different accounts. According to Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008), however, as talk is a relational, mutable, co-construction, possible differences in analytic outcomes can always be expected. Thus, from a post-structuralist stance any discursive account is viewed as having the potential to offer an analytic contribution.

Aside from their mutual experience of familial estrangement, many of the participants shared an involvement with the estrangement organisation Stand Alone. This being the primary medium for recruitment enabled the researcher to have access to a vast network of suitable participants. However, it is possible to argue that this might have influenced the formation of what Connell, Klein and Meyer (2004) call “shared organisational narratives.” Moreover, as the results produced from this study are considered a co-construction between the researcher and the researched, the researcher’s own involvement with Stand Alone (something all participants were aware of) might have played a similarly influential role in the construction of these accounts. No claim is being made of the benefits or shortfalls of this eventuality and

it must be acknowledged that it was not explored analytically. Whilst areas for future research will be discussed in section 5.4, it should also be noted here that future research, exploring the influence that such organisational settings and contexts might play in shaping discourse, might be instructive.

For a small study such as this one, with eleven participants, researchers usually strive for a homogenous sample (Willig, 2013; Smith, 2015). This sample group in contrast did present a degree of diversity as demonstrated in the demographics table in Chapter Three. Willig (2013) warns against the use of demographic information within discursive research as it may become treated as social categories which essentialise and reify experience and thus contradict post-structuralist ideology. Demographics may shape the limits of what is discursively possible for some people at particular moments in time, and therefore should be considered as mutable and dynamic social constructs rather than prescriptive claims of truth. However, certain aspects of the heterogeneity in this sample will be discussed, in order to provide a possible frame of meaning and context to the research.

Many of the studies focusing on familial estrangement to date, have noted their shortcomings in focussing on either the adult child, father or mother, and thereby restricting perspectives on the topic to one side (Agllias, 2013; Scharp, 2014; Gilligan, Sutor & Pillemer, 2015). With the exception of one doctoral study conducted by Robinson (2011), the adoption of a mixed sample of estranged parents, children and siblings appears less common. This study similarly aimed to recruit a mixed sample in the hope that it would, as Flick (2002) has suggested, provide a means through which an understanding of familial estrangement from different perspectives, rather than a single consistent account, could be gained. This appears, additionally, to be in

line with a post-structuralist stance (Haraway, 1992; Burr, 2003). Future research could further consider the possible benefits and limitations of such heterogeneity.

Finally, narrative research is sometimes conducted as a longitudinal study (Murray, 2015) to account for changes in experience over a significant period of time. Similarly, research has shown that differences in the length of an experience might influence narrative accounts - facilitating a mapping of how individuals have, over time, negotiated and managed shifting perspectives, ideological dilemmas and knowledges (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Randol, 2014). In line with previous studies (Robinson, 2011; Agllias, 2013), inclusion criteria specified that participants should have experienced their estrangements for a minimum of six months, whilst no upper limit to the length of an estrangement was applied. As reported by the participants, estrangements ranged in length from one to thirty years - a range which might have played a significant role in narrative constructions of this experience and the way in which people positioned themselves throughout their accounts. This is not something which was explored here and perhaps future research may consider the possible differences between “newly” estranged individuals and those who have been estranged for longer periods, examining, particularly, how they talk about their experience.

5.3.3: Researcher Reflexivity Revisited

In Chapter Three (section 3.5) I explored the role of researcher reflexivity. I will now extend this critique by addressing the data collection, analytic process and research methodology as a whole.

From a post-structuralist perspective, according to Harper (2003), the researcher influences every aspect of the research process, and every choice made is

inevitably biased. For example, a researcher's attention will be drawn to some phenomenon to the exclusion of another (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Critical discourse and narrative analytical approaches acknowledge this as the interpretation of knowledge and concede that as individuals are multiply and dynamically located by talk, absolute transparency can never be achieved. Nonetheless, researcher reflexivity might offer a further critique of the frames of intelligibility and their possible power effects.

The counselling psychology profession, it is argued, has taken an increasingly relational position in practice (Woolfe et al., 2010), emphasising inter-subjectivity and the importance of the therapeutic relationship. From a post-structuralist perspective, interviews are considered co-created (Willig, 2013). Critical approaches, such as the FNA employed in this study, allow CoPs another method of critical appraisal that can be applied to their psychological knowledges, offering alternative understandings and contesting, at times, their rigid assumptions (Foucault, 1978b, 1991b; Souto-Manning, 2014). This has contributed to the promotion of critical reflection as a valued skill within the CoP profession. As a CoP researcher, this research has therefore required me to interrogate, throughout the process, the positions I mobilised as a researcher, as well as the knowledges that resource my clinical practice. It was through this process of reflexivity that I became cognisant of some of the power-related knowledges I was unwittingly endorsing; and I began to become sceptical about these knowledges: with how I used them and how they seemed to locate me in power relations. Like the participants in this study however, becoming aware and critical of these knowledges did not lead to a stable "evacuation" of them. Instead I realised how my own position in relation to the topics of the family and family estrangement, repeatedly changed throughout the process; and I noticed my tendency to alternately inhabit and evacuate.

I have made the commitment to allow space to recognise and apply this within my clinical practice.

The aim of this interview process was to gain access to the volunteer participants' narrative constructions on familial estrangement. In so doing, however, I must acknowledge the fact that the "truth" of their accounts must be recognised as being a product of researcher-researched co-construction. (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). For example, at the end of one interview I was struck by the inquisitiveness of one participant about my involvement with Stand Alone. The participant was interested in the Organisation's agenda and my purpose for conducting this research. I was also struck by participants' apparent honesty in expressing their fears about the stigma that might be inflicted on them after relaying their accounts. This impressed upon me, as a researcher, the possibility of participants self-policing their accounts.

Using a Foucauldian narrative analytic approach has proven to be incredibly challenging academically, personally and professionally; but, coincidentally, has proven, as others such as Tamboukou (2013) and Souto-Manning (2014) have claimed, to be a rewarding research methodology, and one which I hope will offer many benefits to CoPs. In particular, it has sharpened my gaze, critically, on the power-laden constructions of the family to which I was unwittingly subject - for "*the family is [indeed] everywhere*" (Davidoff et al., 1999, p. 51). Moreover, as one is always located within discourse, it was challenging to retain the professional rectitude necessary to resist becoming subject to or censorious of their truth claims. For example, I found myself occupying a position of deference when listening to certain statements that characterised the "separated from the family and accepting the loss" subjectivity. Likewise, I found myself inhabiting one of commiseration on hearing constructions of victim(hood) by those positioned within "abandoned by the family".

In these discourses, it was difficult to “hold on” and, where necessary, reposition myself so as not to succumb to their mobilised subject positions. The estranged narrative, in particular, presented a unique and constant challenge for me in maintaining my intended stance as an objective, ironic researcher. These accounts, in which participants’ were re-positioned from being a family keeper to being abandoned, to grieving the reportedly unexpected losses endured, contained particularly pained and sorrowful elements which, as an individual were very difficult to remain “removed” from. Throughout the process of analysing their transcripts/data and compiling this thesis, I found myself having to repeatedly remind myself of my empirical position in order to remain unclaimed by these elements and participants’ knowledges and to remain reflexive in my own discursive position – an admittedly arduous task. Despite these challenges, I find reassurance in the suggestion put forward by Lowenthal and Snell (2008), that post-structuralist reflexivity encourages practitioners to reposition themselves to their knowledge, their selves and their clients so that they are able to see alternative possibilities and to understand that what may be considered true in one moment may not be in the next. Moreover, these experiences helped to remind me of the task which we, therapeutic practitioners, face as we witness and share our clients’ stories and the challenges we might encounter in attempting to remain ironic to their/our language in order to facilitate diverse therapeutic explorations and processing.

5.4: Considerations for future research

This research has focussed on the narrative constructions offered by eleven individuals on their experiences of familial estrangement and the contingent power

games of those accounts. Future research suggestions in the field of counselling psychology informed by the completion of this study will now be considered.

As discussed in Section 5.3.1, narrative and Foucauldian informed research methodologies have been criticised for having limited clinical applicability (Avdi & Georgaca, 2007; Dallos & Vetere, 2009). Future research could therefore aim to increase its relevance to the therapeutic encounter. This is of particular importance to the counselling psychology profession which is increasingly arguing that research and clinical practice are not mutually exclusive but rather, that each should influence and be influenced by the other (Corrie & Callahan, 2000; Blair, 2010). A discursive examination of naturalistic recordings (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) of the therapeutic sessions between a CoP and an estranged individual could thus facilitate an analysis of the CoP-client interaction in which rhetorical strategies and power games surrounding this phenomenon could be exposed. A DP analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992), might be especially appropriate for examining this and investigating what talk on estrangement, within a therapeutic encounter, appears to be doing.

It must also be noted that this study involved the inclusion of individual members of an estranged relationship, rather than couples or family units. Beitin (2008) discussed the advantages of conducting studies with a variety of individual and group configurations to explore familial relationships. Whilst this may not have been manageable within the framework of this study, future research might aim to collect data from various estranged individuals from the same family.

Familial estrangement can be conceptualised not as a stationary experience but as a dynamic process involving various stages of emotional and physical estrangement and, at times, reconciliation (Robinson, 2011; Agllias, 2017). This study aimed to explore the experiences of physical estrangement and did not include an analytic

exploration of emotional estrangement or the experience of reconciliation. Throughout the interview, participants' talk highlighted elements of emotional estrangement. Many participants also indicated that they would be open to reconciling with their estranged familial relations; whilst others, explained that they had previously reconciled and subsequently became estranged again. Future research might thus aim to adopt a more longitudinal narrative approach (Willig, 2013) to explore the various "stages" of an estrangement across its "lifespan".

5.5: Overall Conclusions

FNA offers an ironic approach to language, knowledge and power as applied to the narrative accounts of eleven individuals on their personal experiences of familial estrangement. This particular reading of the research was one of many possible, and presents a critical perspective on the various constructions and subject positionings of familial estrangement, whilst also debunking grand narratives about the family. "*As Marx (c.f. Marx, 1951) might have said, men 'make their own identities [but] they do not make them just as they please. They make them under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past' "* (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, p. 219). This research has similarly aimed to highlight the inherent power in talk surrounding the topic of family and familial estrangement and the subject positions individuals may unwittingly become located in. In employing this approach to highlight the various ways in which experiences of familial estrangement can be constructed and narrated, it is argued that this should, I would suggest, raise CoPs' awareness and embolden them to adopt an equally critical and meta-aware approach in their work with estranged individuals and individual experiences of the family.

References

- Agllias, K. (2011). No longer on speaking terms: The losses associated with family estrangement at the end of life. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 92, 107-113.
- Agllias, K. (2013). The gendered experience of family estrangement in later life. *Affili: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 28, 309-321.
- Agllias, K. (2017). *Family estrangements: A matter of perspective*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Agllias, K., & Gray, M. (2013). Secrets and lies: The ethical implications of family estrangement. In M. Carey & L. Green (Eds.). *Practical social work ethics: Complex dilemmas within applied social care*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Ahmed, S. (2012). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory Oedipus complex: A critical study with reference to D. H. Lawrence's "Sons and Loves". *International Journal of English and Literature*, 3, 60-70.
- Allen, K. R. (2016). Feminist theory in family studies: History, reflection and critique. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 8, 207-224.
- American Bible Society (1976). *Good news bible*. Cambridge: University Press.
- American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.)- DSM-5. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American psychological association* (6th ed.). Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Andersen, M. L. (1991). Feminism and the American family ideal. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 27, 235-246.
- Anderson, H. (2001). Postmodern collaborative and person-centered therapies: What would Carl Rogers say? *Journal of Family Therapy*, 23, 339-360.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing narrative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Antonucci, T. C., Jackson, J. S., & Biggs, S. (2007). Intergenerational relations: Theory, research, and policy. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 679-693.
- Arribas-Ayllon, M., & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Foucauldian discourse analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.). *The sage handbook of qualitative research psychology* (pp. 91-108). London: Sage Publications.
- Avdi, E., & Georgaca, E. (2007). Discourse analysis and psychotherapy: A critical review. *Discourse*, 9, 157-176.
- Bailey, J. (2010). Family Relationships. In E. Foyster & J. Marten (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the age of enlightenment* (pp. 14-32). London: Bloomsbury
- Barkham, M., Evans, C., Margison, F., Mcgrath, G., Mellor-Clark, J., Milne, D., & Connell, J. (1998). The rationale for developing and implementing core outcome batteries for routine use in service settings and psychotherapy outcome research. *Journal of Mental Health*, 7, 35 – 47.
- Bartholomew, K., & Harowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 226-244.
- Basaure, M. (2009). Foucault and the ‘Anti-Oedipus movement’: Psychoanalysis as disciplinary power. *History of Psychiatry*, 20, 340-359.
- Baures, M. M. (1996). Letting go of bitterness and hate. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 36, 75-90.
- Baxter, L. A., Henauw, C., Huisman, D., Livesay, C. B., Norwood, K., Su, H., Wolf, B., & Young, B. (2009). Lay conceptions of “family”: A replication and extension. *Journal of Family Communication*, 9, 170-189.
- Baxter, L. A., Norwood, K. M., Asbury, B., Jannusch, A., & Scharp, K. M. (2012). Narrative coherence in online stories told by members of the adoption triad. *Journal of Family Communication*, 12, 265-283.
- Baxter, L. A., Norwood, K. M., Asbury, B., & Scharp, K. M. (2014). Narrating adoption: Resisting adoption as “second best” in online stories of domestic adoption told by adoptive parents. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14, 253-269.

- Baxter, L. A, Scharp, K. M., Asbury, A., Jannusch, A., & Norwood, K. M. (2012). "Birthmothers are not bad people": A dialogic perspective of online birth mothers. *Qualitative Communication, 1*, 53-82.
- Beitin, B. (2008). Qualitative research in marriage and family therapy: Who is in the interview? *Contemporary Family Therapy, 30*, 48-58.
- Berghaus, B. J. (2011). A new look at attachment theory and adult attachment behaviour. *Behaviorology Today, 14*, 3-10.
- Bergner, S. (2009). The analytic environment in times of bodily dysfunction: The effect of psychoanalytic psychosomatic theories. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 26*, 362 -378.
- Bernardes, J. (1999). We must not define "The Family"! *Marriage & Family Review, 28*, 21-41.
- Besley, T. (2001). Foucauldian influences in narrative therapy: An approach for schools. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 2*, 72-93.
- Bion, W. R. (1970). *Attention and interpretation*. London: Heinemann.
- Blair, L. (2010). A critical review of the scientist-practitioner model for counselling psychology. *Counselling Psychology Review, 25*, 19-30.
- Borcsa, M., Hanks, H., & Vetere, A. (2013). The development of family therapy and systemic practice in Europe: Some reflections and concerns. *Contemporary Family Therapy. 35*, 342-348.
- Boss, P., Doherty W. J., LaRossa, R., Schumm, W. R., & Steinmetz, S. K. (Eds.). (1993). *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bottero, W. (2015). Practising family history: 'Identity' as a category of social practice. *The British Journal of Sociology, 66*, 534-556.
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. London: Jason Aronson.
- Bowlby, J. (1969) *Attachment and loss (Vol. I): attachment*. New York: Basic Books.

- Brown, C. (2007). Situating knowledge and power in the therapeutic alliance. In C. Brown & T. Augusta-Scott (Eds.). *Narrative therapy: Making meaning, making lives* (pp. 3-22). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Brown, J. (1999). Bowen Family Systems Theory and Practice: Illustration and critique. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 20, 94-103.
- Bruner, J. 1990. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bryng-Hall, J. (2008). The crucial roles of attachment in family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 30, 129-146.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). East Sussex: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). What is critique? An essay on Foucault's virtue (2001). In S. Salih & J. Butler (Eds.). *The Judith Butler reader* (pp. 302-312). MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Carter, E. A., & McGoldrick, M. (1980). *The family life cycle: A framework for family therapy*. New York: Gardner Press.
- Cavallo, S., & Evangelisti, S. (2010) (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the Early Modern Age*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Celani, D. P. (2007). A structural analysis of the obsessional character: A Fairbairnian perspective. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 67, 119-140.
- Charles, N. (2012). Families, communities and social change: then and now. *The Sociological Review*, 60, 438-456.
- Charon, J. M., & Hall, P. (2009). *Symbolic interactionism: An introduction, an interpretation, an integration*. (4th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hill Inc.
- Chouliaraki, L. & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Cicirelli, V. G. (1995). *Sibling relationships across the lifespan*. London: Plenum Press.

- Collins English Dictionary (n.d). *Estrange*. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/estrange>
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, N. A. D., Klein, J. H., & Meyer, E. (2004). Narrative approaches to the transfer of organisational knowledge. *Knowledge Management Research and Practice*, 2, 184-193.
- Cooper, M., O'Hara, M., Schmid, P. F., & Bohart, A. C (2013). *The handbook of person-centred psychotherapy & counselling* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cooper, M., & Mcleod, J. (2007). A pluralistic framework for counselling and psychotherapy: Implications for research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 7, 135-143.
- Corey, G. (2013). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- Corrie, S., & Callahan, M. M. (2000). A review of the scientist-practitioner model: Reflections on its potential contribution to counselling psychology within the context of current health care trends. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 73, 413-427.
- Coveney, J. (1998). The government and ethics of health promotion: The importance of Michel Foucault. *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice* 13, 459–468.
- Crabb, S., & Augoustinos, M. (2008). Genes and family in the media. *Health Sociology Review*, 17, 303-312.
- Crossley, M. L. (2000). *Introducing narrative psychology: Self, trauma and the construction of meaning*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Crossno, M. A. (2011). Bowen family systems theory. In L. Metcalf (Ed.). *Marriage and family therapy: A practice-oriented approach*. New York: Springer Publishing Company, LLC.
- Cunningham, J., & Cunningham, S. (2014). *Sociology and social work* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Dallos, R., & Draper, R. (2010). *An introduction to family therapy: Systemic theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Dallos, R., & Vetere, A. (2009). *Systemic therapy and attachment narratives: Applications in a range of clinical settings*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.
- Daly, K. J. (2001). Deconstructing family time: From ideology to lived experience. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 283-294.
- Danaher, G., Schirato, T., & Webb, J. (2000). *Understanding Foucault*. London: Sage.
- Dattilio, F. M., & Nichols, M. P. (2011). Reuniting estranged family members: A cognitive-behavioural-systemic perspective. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 39, 88-99.
- Davidoff, L., Doolittle, M., Fink, J., & Holden, K. (1999). *The family Story: Blood, contract and intimacy, 1830-1960*. Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd.
- Davila, J. & Cobb, R. J. (2004). Predictors of change in adult attachment security. In W.S. Rholes & J.A. Simpson (Eds.). *Adult Attachment: Theory, research, and clinical implications*. NY: Guildford Press.
- Davis, K. (1986). The process of problem (re)formulation in psychotherapy. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 8, 44-74.
- Davies, B., & Harre, R. (1999). Positioning and personhood. In R. Harre & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.). *Positioning theory* (pp. 35-53). Oxford: Blackwell.
- DePaulo, B. M., & Morris, W. L. (2005). Singles in society and science. *Psychological Enquiry*, 16, 57-83.
- Dickerson, P. (1997). 'It's not just me who' saying this...' The deployment of cited others in televised political discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36, 33-48.
- Dickerson, P. (2000). 'But I'm different to them': Constructing contrasts between self and others in talk-in-interaction. *British School of Social Psychology*, 39, 381-398.
- Dickerson, P. (2012). *Social Psychology: Traditional and critical perspectives*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

- Douglas, B., Woolfe, R., Strawbridge, S., Kasket, E., & Galbraith, V. (Eds.). (2016). *The handbook of counselling psychology* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Eckermann, A. C. (2009). 'Kumana'. Retrieved from <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/18980/auto/0/KUMANA>
- Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1997). Jockeying for position: The construction of masculine identities. *Discourse and Society*, 8, 203-217.
- Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Edwards, D., & Stokoe, E. H. (2004). Discursive psychology, focus group interviews and participants' categories. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22, 000-000.
- Ellenberger, H. F. (1970). *The discovery of the unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- Elliot, F. R. (1986). *The family: Change or continuity?* Hampshire: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Ellman, S. J. (2010). *When theories touch: A historical and theoretical integration of psychoanalytic thought*. London: Karnac Books Ltd.
- Emerson, P., & Frosh, S. (2004). *Critical narrative analysis in psychology: A guide to practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Erikson, E. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: International University Press.
- Eysenck, H. (1985). *The Meaning of dreams* (rev. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1943). The repression and the return of bad objects. In W. R. D. Fairbairn (1952). *Psychoanalytic studies of the personality* (pp. 59–81). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1958). On the nature and aims of psychoanalytic treatment. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 39, 374-385.
- Family and Parenting institute (2002). *Soaps and the family*. Retrieved from <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20091204121554/http://www.familyandparenting.org/Filestore/Documents/research/soapstoryforweb.pdf>
- Farmer, M. (1979). *The Family* (2nd ed.). London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Feltham, C. (2013). *Counselling and counselling psychology: A critical examination*. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.
- Finlay, L. (2003). The intertwining of body, self and world: a phenomenological study of living with recently diagnosed multiple sclerosis. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 34, 157-178.
- Finlay, L., & Gough, B. (Eds.). (2003). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Fiske, J. (1996). Opening the Hallway: Some remarks on the fertility of Stuart Hall's contribution to critical theory. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.). *Stuart Hall: critical dialogues in cultural studies*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Flick, U. (1992). *An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Floyd, K., Mikkelsen, A. C., & Judd, J. (2006). Defining the family through relationships. In L. H. Turner & R. West (Eds.). *The family communication handbook* (pp. 21-42). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1961). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1977). Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.). *Language, counter-memory practice: Selected essays and interviews* (pp. 139-164). Cornell University Press: New York.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *History of Sexuality: An introduction*. Trans. Hurley, Robert. Random House Inc., New York. (Originally published in 1976 as *La volonté de savoir [Histoire de la sexualité I]*.)

- Foucault, M. (1978b). "What is Critique?" In S. Lotringer & L. Hochroth. (1997). *The politics of truth* (pp. 41-81). New York: Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings. 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. In H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-228). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 775-795.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & F. P. Hutton (Eds.). *Technologies of the self*. London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, M. (1989). *Interview: The concern for truth*. Foucault Live. New York: Semiotext.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller (Eds.). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault* (pp. 87-104). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991b). What is Enlightenment? In P. Rabinow (Ed.). *The Foucault Reader: An introduction to Foucault's thought* (pp. 32-50). (P. Rabinow, Trans.). London: Penguin Books
- Foucault, M. (2001). The subject and power, R. Hurley et al. (Trans.). In J. D. Faubion (Ed.). *Michel Foucault: Power, the essential works of Michel Foucault 1954 – 1984* (Vol. III). London: Penguin Press.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. Picador: New York.
- Ford, D. Y. (1994). An exploration of perceptions of alternative family structures among university students. *Family Relations*, 43, 68-73.

- Foyster, E., & Marten, J. (2010) (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the age of Enlightenment*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Frank, A. W. (1998). Stories of illness as care of the self: A Foucauldian dialogue. *Health*, 2, 329-348.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.
- Freud, S. (1930). *Civilization and its discontents*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Friesen, P. J. (2003). Emotional cutoff and the brain. In P. Titelman (Ed.). *Emotional cutoff: Bowen family systems theory perspectives* (pp. 83-107). New York: Haworth.
- Frosh, S. (1987). *The politics of psychoanalysis: An introduction to Freudian and Post-Freudian theory*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Ltd.
- Frye, N. (1957). *Anatomy of criticism*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Galvin, K. M. (2006). Diversity's impact on defining the family: Discourse-dependence and identity. In L. H. Turner & R. West (Eds.). *The family communication sourcebook* (pp. 3-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Garver, V. L. (2010). Faith and religion. In L. J. Wilkinson (Ed.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the middle ages* (pp. 145-160). London: Bloomsbury.
- Gay, P. (1985). *Freud for historians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gazi, E. (2013). 'Fatherland, religion, family': Exploring the history of a slogan in Greece, 1880–1930. *Gender & History*, 25, 700-710.
- Gee, J. P. (1991). A linguistic approach to narrative. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1, 15-39.
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gilligan, M., Suitor, J. J., & Pillemer, K. (2015). Estrangement between mothers and adult children: The role of norms and values. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77, 908-920.
- Gittins, D. (1993). *The Family in Question: Changing households & familiar ideologies* (2nd ed.). Hampshire: The Macmillan press Ltd.
- Goldberg, P. J. P. (2010). Family Relationships. In L. J. Wilkinson (Ed.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the Middle Ages* (pp. 21-40). London: Bloomsbury.
- Golsworthy, R. (2004). Counselling psychology and psychiatric classification: Clash or co-existence? *Counselling Psychology Review*, 19, 23-28.
- Gough, B. (2003). Deconstructing reflexivity. In L. Finlay & M. Gough (Eds.). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences* (pp. 21-35). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1990). *What is family?* California: Mayfield.
- Haraway, D. (1992). Situated Knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14, 575-599.
- Hareven, T. (1987). Historical analysis of the family. In M. B. Sussman & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.). *The handbook of marriage and the family* (pp. 37-57). New York: Plenum Press.
- Harkness, S. (2014). The consequences of interpersonal rewards. *Social Psychology & Family*, 8, 219-231.
- Harlow, M. (2010). Family relationships. In M. Harlow & R. Laurence (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in Antiquity* (pp. 13-30). London: Bloomsbury
- Harlow, M., & Laurence, R. (2010) (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in Antiquity*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Harper, D. (2003). Developing a critically reflexive position using discourse analysis. In Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (Eds.). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for*

researchers in health and social sciences (pp. 78-92). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

- Herman, D. (2009). Cognitive approaches to narrative analysis. In G. Brone & J. Vandaele (Eds.). *Cognitive poetics: Goals, gains and gaps*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co.
- Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage.
- Hook, D. (2007). *Foucault: Psychology and the analytics of power*. New York & London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horton-Salway, M. (2001). Narrative identities and the management of personal accountability in talk about ME: A discursive psychology approach to illness narrative. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 6, 247-259.
- Hostetler, J. A. (1993). *Amish Society* (4th Ed.). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- House, R., & Loewenthal, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Against and for CBT: Towards a constructive Dialogue?* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.
- Hirst, P., & Woolley, P. (1982). *Social relations and human attributes*. London: Tavistock Press.
- Johnstone, L. (1993). Family management in “schizophrenia”: Its assumptions and contradictions. *Journal of Mental Health*, 2, 255-269.
- Kagitcibasi, C. (1996). *Family and human development across cultures: A view from the other side*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kagitcibasi, C. (2007). *Family, self, and human development across cultures: Theory and applications*. London: Psychology Press.
- Kerr, M., & Bowen, M. (1988). *Family Evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Kirschenbaum, H., & Henderson, V. L. (1990). *The Carl Rogers reader*. London: Constable.

- Klein, M. (1945). The Oedipus complex in the light of early anxieties. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 26, 11-33.
- Kradin, R. (2009). The family myth: Its deconstruction and replacement with a balanced humanised narrative. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 54, 217-232.
- Kunesh, P. H. (2007) Banishment as cultural justice in contemporary tribal legal systems. *New Mexico Law Review*, 37.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Lacombe, D. (1996). Reforming Foucault: A critique of the social control thesis. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47, 332-352.
- Laing, R. D., & Esterson, A. (1964). *Sanity, madness and the family*. London: Penguin Books.
- Langellier, K. M. (1989). Personal narratives: Perspectives on theory and research. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 9, 243-276.
- Larsson, P., Brooks, O., & Lowenthal, D. (2012). Counselling psychology and diagnostic categories: A critical literature review. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 27, 55-67.
- LaSala, M. C. (2000). Lesbians, gay men, and their parents: Family therapy for the coming-out crisis. *Family process*, 39, 67-81.
- Lawler, S. (2008). *Identity: Sociological perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- LeBey, B. (2001). *Family Estrangement: How they begin, how to mend them, how to cope with them*. New York: Bantham.
- Lebeau, V. (2015). Sanity, madness and the family/family life: An urgent retrospective. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 16, 305–307.
- Lerman, H. (1986). From Freud to feminist personality theory: Getting here from there. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 10, 1-18.
- Link, J. (1983). In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.). (2010). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage.

- Linton, R. (1949). The natural history of the family. In N. R. Anshen (Ed.). *The family: its function and destiny*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Loewenthal, D., & Snell, R. (2003). *Postmodernism for psychotherapists; a critical reader*. Hove: Routledge.
- Luxton, M. (2015). Feminist scholarship and family sociology: New ways of thinking, outstanding questions. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 52, 212-221.
- Malinowski, B. (1927). *Sex and repression in savage society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Malson, H. (2004). Fictional(ising) identity? Ontological assumptions and the methodological production of ('anorexic') subjectivities. In M. Andrews, S. D. Slater, C. Squire & A. Treacher (Eds.). *Uses of narrative*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Marcia, J. E., Waterman, A. S., Matteson, D. R., Archer, S. L., & Orlofsky, J. L. (1993). *Ego Identity: A handbook for psychosocial research*. NY: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Maynes, J. M., & Waltner, A. (2012). *The family: A world history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McNay, L. (1994). *Foucault: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of age in Samoa*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Mearns, D., & Thorne, B. (2000). *Person centred therapy today: New Frontiers in theory and practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Miall, C. E. (1989). Reproductive technology vs. the stigma of involuntary childlessness. *Social Casework*, 70, 43-50.
- Miller, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood: A narrative approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Miller, T. (2011). *Making sense of fatherhood: Gender, caring and work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, H. L. (2007). *The subject of anthropology: Gender, symbolism and psychoanalysis*. Cambridge: Policy Press.
- Morgan, D. (1996). *Family connections*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Morgan, P. (1999). *Farewell to the family: Public policy and family breakdown in Britain and the USA* (2nd ed.). London: Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Moscovici, S. (1972) Theory and society in social psychology. In J. Isreal & H. Tajfel (Eds.). *The context of social psychology: A critical assessment*. London: Academic Press.
- Moser, C. J., Jones, R. A., Zaorski, D. M., Mirsalimi, H., & Lucher, A. F. (2005). The impact of the sibling in clinical practice: Transference and countertransference. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 42, 267-278.
- Mount, F. (2012). *Mind the gap: The new class divide in Britain*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=RXzKy9MwRv4C&printsec=copyright#v=onepage&q&f=false> (Original work published 2004)
- Muncie, J., Wetherell, M., Langan, M., Dallos, R., & Cochrane, A. (1997). *Understanding the family* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd
- Murdock, G. (1968). The universality of the nuclear family. In N. W. Bell & E. F. Vogel (Eds.). *A modern introduction to the family* (rev. ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Murray, M. (2015). Narrative psychology. In J. Smith (Ed.). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd ed.). (pp. 85-107). London: Sage.
- Mutch, A. (2015). Pastoral Power and governmentality: from therapy to self help. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 46, 268-285.
- New American Standard Bible (1995). “*Difficult times will come*”. Retrieved from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3&version=NASB>
- O’Callaghan, J. (2010). *Procrastinating doing: Doing procrastination: A discourse analysis of university students’ accounts of doing and undoing academic procrastination*. University of Roehampton.
- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- O’Reilly, M. (2014). Blame and accountability in family therapy: Making sense of therapeutic spaces discursively. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2, 163-177.

- Oxford Dictionaries (2015). *Family*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/family>
- Packard, T. (2009). The 2008 Leona Tyler award address: Core values that distinguish counselling psychology: Personal and professional perspectives. *The Counselling Psychologist*, 37, 610–624.
- Páez, D., Bilbao, M. A., Bobowik, M., Campos, M., & Basabe, N. (2011). Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! The impact of Christmas rituals on subjective well-being and family's emotional climate. *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 373-386.
- Palmer, S., Dainow, S., & Milner, P. (Eds.). (1996). *Counselling: The BAC counselling reader*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discursive dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (Ed.). (1999). *Deconstructing psychotherapy*. London: Sage publications.
- Parker, I. (2015). *Psychology after discourse analysis: Concepts, methods, critique*. East Sussex: Routledge.
- Parritt, S. (2016). Working with difference and diversity. In B. Douglas, R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, E. Kasket, & V. Galbraith (Eds.). *The handbook of counselling psychology* (pp. 198-212). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Parry, A., & Doan, R. E. (1994). *Story re-visions: Narrative therapy in the postmodern world*. New York: Guildford.
- Parsons, R. (1959). The social structure of the family. In R. Anshen (Ed.). *The family: its function and destiny*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Patterson, W. (2013). Narratives of events: Labovian narrative analysis and its limitations. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (2013). *Doing Narrative Research* (2nd ed.). (pp. 27-46). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Petronio, S. & Durham, W. T (2008). Communication privacy management theory. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.). *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication*. (pp. 309-322). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Potter, J. (1996). Discourse analysis and constructionist approaches: theoretical background. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.). *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 125-140). Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Potter, J., & Hepburn, A. (2005). Qualitative interviews in psychology: Problems and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, 281-307.
- Rabinow, P. (Ed.). (1984). *The Foucault reader: An introduction to Foucault's thought*. New York. London: Penguin Books.
- Randol, L. T. (2014). *Navigating discursive power relations: A Foucauldian discourse analysis into counselling psychologists' accounts of the mind-body relationship*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Roehampton.
- Reynolds, J., & Wetherell, M. (2003). The discursive climate of singleness: The consequences for women's negotiations of a single identity. *Feminism & Psychology*, 13, 489-510.
- Ricouer, P. (1988). *Time and narrative* (Vol. III). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Riessman, K. C. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Risq, R. (2006). Training and disillusion in counselling psychology: a psychoanalytic perspective. *Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 79, 613-627.
- Risq, R. (2007). Tread softly: Counselling psychology and neuroscience. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 22, 5-18.
- Ristovski-Slijepcevic, S., Chapman, G. E., & Beagan, B. L. (2010). Being a 'good mother': Dietary governmentality in the family food practices of three ethnocultural groups in Canada. *Health*, 14, 467-483.
- Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person: a therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Robinson, J. L. (2011). *'Everything in Motion, Motion in Everything'. The experience and process of negotiating developmental transitions*. (Doctoral Dissertation, City University London). Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/7729807/Negotiating_Adult_Family_Estrangement_Through_Time_A_Grounded_Theory_of_Personal_Interpersonal_Social_and_Symbolic_Process.

- Rohr, R. (2002). Grieving as sacred space. *Sojourner*. Retrieved from <http://sojo.net/magazine/2002/01/grieving-sacred-space>
- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation*. (Vols. I & II). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Saller, R. O., & Shaw, B. D. (1984). Tombstones and Roman family relations in principate: Civilians, soldiers and slaves. *Journal of Roman Studies*, 74, 124-156.
- Sandelowksi, M. (1995). Sample Size in Qualitative Research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 18, 179-183.
- Sarup, M. (1993). *An introductory guide to post-structuralism and postmodernism* (2nd ed.). Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Saslow, L. R., Willer, R., Feinberg, M., Piff, P. K., Clark, K., Keltner, D., & Saturn, S. R. (2013). My Brother's Keeper? Compassion predicts generosity more among less religious individuals. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 4, 31-38.
- Scabini, E., Marta, E. & Lanz, M. (2006). *The transition to adulthood and family relations: An intergenerational perspective*. Hove, East Sussex: Psychology Press.
- Scharff, J. S. (2004). Play and very young children in object relations family therapy. *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 1, 259-268.
- Scharp, K. (2014). *(De) Constructing family: Exploring communicative practices in accomplishing and maintaining estrangement between adult children and their parents*. (Doctoral Thesis, University of Iowa). Retrieved from <http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/4745>
- Schneider, D. M. (1980). *American kinship: A cultural account* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Chicago Press.
- Segrin, C. & Flora, J. (2011). *Family communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Seltzer, J. A., Bachrach, C. A., Bianchi, S. M., Bledsoe, C. H., Casper, L. M., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., DiPrete, T. A. Hotz, V. J., Morgan, S. P., Sanders, S. G.,

- & Thomas, D. (2005). Examining family change and variation: Challenges for family demographers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 908-925.
- Shelton, J.-A. (2010). The State. In M. Harlow & R. Laurence (Eds.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in Antiquity* (pp. 115-132). London: Bloomsbury.
 - Shorter, E. (1976). *The making of the modern family*. London: Collins.
 - Sichel, M. (2004). *Healing from family rifts: Ten steps to finding peace after being cut off from a family member*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
 - Simonelli, L. E., Ray, W. J. & Pincus, A. L. (2004). Attachment models and their relationship with anxiety, worry and depression, *Counselling and Clinical Psychology Journal*, 1, 107-118.
 - Smith, D. E. (1978). 'K is mentally ill' the anatomy of a factual account. *Sociology*, 12, 23-53.
 - Smith, J. (Ed.). (2015). *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
 - Souto-Manning, M. (2014). Critical narrative analysis: the interplay of critical discourse and narrative analyses. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27, 159-180.
 - Souto-Manning, M., & Ray, N. (2007). Beyond surviving in the ivory tower: Black and brown women's living narratives. *Equity & Excellent in Education*, 40, 280-290.
 - Squire, C. (2013). From experience-centred to socioculturally-oriented approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.). (2013). *Doing narrative research* (pp. 47-71). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
 - Stacey, J. (1997). *In the name of the family: Rethinking values in the postmodern age*. Boston: Beacon Press.
 - Stand Alone (2014). *The Prevalence of Family Estrangement*. Retrieved from <http://standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/StandAlonePrevalenceRESEARCH3.pdf>
 - Strawbridge, S., & Woolfe, R. (2010). Counselling psychology: Origins, developments and challenges. In R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, B. Douglas & W. Dryden (Eds.). *Handbook of counselling psychology* (3rd ed.). (pp. 3-22). London:

Sage.

- Stedmon, J. & Dallos, R. (2009). *Reflective practice in psychotherapy and counselling*. Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Stenner, P. (2013) Affectivity, liminality and psychology without foundations. In J. Straub, E. Sørensen, P. Chakkarath & G. Rebane (Eds.). *Cultural psychology, aesthetics and postmodernity*. Giessen: Psychosozial Verlag.
- Sterponi, L. (2009). Accountability in family discourse: Socialization into norms and standards and negotiation of responsibility in Italian dinner conversations. *Childhood*, 16, 441–459.
- Sutton, J. (2017). Liminality and the stuff of life. *The Psychologist*, 30, 14-15.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & L. W. Austin (Eds.). *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Tamboukou, M. (2013). A Foucauldian approach to narratives. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.). *Doing narrative research* (2nd ed.). (pp. 88-107). London: Sage.
- Taylor, C. (2012). Foucault and familial power. *Hypatia*, 27, 201-218.
- Thompson, K. (2003). Forms of resistance: Foucault on tactical reversal and self-formation. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 36, 113-138.
- The British Psychological Society (2005). *Division of counselling psychology: Professional practice guidelines*. Leicester: British Psychological Society. Retrieved from www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/professional_practice_guidelines_-_division_of_counselling_psychology.pdf
- The British Psychological Society (2014). *Code of human research ethics*. Leicester: BPS. Retrieved from http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/General/code_of_human_research_ethics_oct_2014.pdf
- Trost, J. (1990). Do we mean the same by the concept of family? *Communication Research*, 17, 431–443.

- Trumbach, R. (1978). *The rise of the egalitarian family: Aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth-century England*. New York: Academic Press.
- United Nations (2015). *Family*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/family/>
- Valentine, C. W. (1956). *The Normal Child (and some of his abnormalities)*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Vermeer, P. (2014). Religion and family life: An overview of current research and suggestions for future research. *Religions*, 5, 402-421.
- Vermes, C. (2016). Becoming an entrepreneur-practitioner. In B. Douglas, R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, E. Kasket & V. Galbraith (Eds.). *The handbook of counselling psychology* (4th ed.). (pp. 616-639). London: Sage publication Ltd.
- Vetere, A., & Dowling, A. (Eds.). (2005). *Narrative therapies with children and their families: A practitioner's guide to concepts and approaches*. East Sussex: Routledge.
- Ward, J. C. (2010). Community. In L. J. Wilkinson (Ed.). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the Middle Ages*. (pp. 41-56). London: Bloomsbury.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., & Jackson, D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J. H., & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: principles of problem formation and problem resolution*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Wells, K. (2011). *Narrative inquiry*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and poststructuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society*, 9, 387-412.
- White, M. (1995). *Re-authoring lives: Interviews and essays*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre.
- White, M. & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Wilkinson, L. J. (Ed.). (2010). *A cultural history of childhood and family in the Middle Ages*. London: Bloomsbury.

- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Willig, C., & Stainton-Rogers, W. (Eds.). (2008). *The sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. London: Sage.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1965). *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). *Methods for critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Woodhead, L. (2005). Family and society. In C. Partridge (Ed.). *The new lion handbook: The world's religions* (3rd ed.). (pp. 340-342). Oxford: Lion Hudson PLC.
- Woolfe, R. (2012). Risorgimento: A history of counselling psychology in Britain. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 27, 72-78.
- Woolfe, R. (2016). Mapping the world of helping: The place of counselling psychology. In B. Douglas, R. Woolfe, S. Strawbridge, E. Kasket & V. Galbraith (Eds.). *The handbook of counselling psychology* (4th ed.). (pp. 5-19). London: Sage publication Ltd.
- Woolfe, R., & Dryden, W. (Ed.). (1996). *Handbook of counselling psychology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Woolfe, R., Dryden, W., & Strawbridge, S. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of counselling psychology* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Woolfe, R., Strawbridge, S., Douglas, B., & Dryden, W. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of counselling psychology* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential psychotherapy*. California: Basic Books.
- Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, 15, 215-228.

- Yoshimura, C. G. (2006). Getting along with in-laws: Relationships with sibling-in-law. In K. Floyd & M. T. Morman (Eds.). *Widening the family circle*. (pp. 117-127). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, C. (2013). South African counselling psychology at the crossroads: Lessons to be learned from around the world. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 43, 422–433.
- Young, C., Bantjes, J., & Kagee, A. (2016). Professional boundaries and the identity of counselling psychology in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46, 3-8.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Recruitment Flyer for Stand Alone



Dear Participants,

I am writing today as you have previously indicated an interest in participating in our research projects. One of our London support group leaders, Tamara Vaughan, is currently completing her doctoral research on the subject of family estrangement. She is based at the University of Roehampton in the department of Counselling Psychology. The title of her research is 'A narrative investigation of adult estrangement'.

As part of this research, she would like to speak to members of the Stand Alone community about their experiences of family estrangement.

Taking part in this research would involve a face-to-face interview, lasting around an hour. This interview would take place at Roehampton or at The Priory Hospital in Roehampton. For this reason, we would be looking for people who are living in the London area, or who are prepared to travel to London to take part.

Tamara is looking for people from all backgrounds and estrangement experiences to take part in the research. However, she asks that you have been physically estranged (i.e. cut contact or had contact ceased with you) from at least one immediate family member (i.e. sibling, parent or child) for at least 6 months and that you are over the age of 18.

If you would like to take part, please fill in the form below. Tamara will then be in touch for an initial chat if she feels she can accommodate you within the project. Please be aware that there is no compulsion or pressure to participate in this study. Should you choose not to participate or subsequently withdraw, your treatment will not be adversely affected.

Name:

E-mail:

Telephone number:

Location:

(This will be a HTML coded live form & responses will be directly forwarded to Tamara)

Please note: Many people find it cathartic to take part in research projects and to talk to researchers about their experiences. However, this is not a support opportunity and the interview will be approached differently to the explorations that take place in our support groups. To sign up to our support groups, please click here: <http://standalone.org.uk/1599-2/>



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Adult estrangement, as described by Agllias (2011; pg. 107) is the “*distancing and loss of affection between family members*”. It is widespread occurrence and yet, one which has received little attention both socially and within empirical studies. As a result, various professionals and academics, such as counselling psychologists, still have a limited understanding of this experience.

This study has been designed to aim to explore various facets of the experience of estrangement through the way that people speak about their estrangement. The research question is: “how do adults construct experiences of estrangement”.

What participation involves:

To take part in this study, we ask that you be over the age of 18 and have ceased contact or had contact ceased with you, from at least one immediate family member (i.e. parent, child, sibling) for at least 6 months. I am to recruit 10 individuals, each of whom will be required to take part in an individual interview for 45 minutes to an hour (approx.) which will be audio recorded.

Interviews will take place at The University of Roehampton, The Priory Hospital Roehampton or in your home.

Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the interview at any stage. There is no pressure or compulsion to participate and should you decline to participate or subsequently withdraw, your treatment will not be adversely affected.

The interview will be a space in which the experience of estrangement will be explored, this however, is different to the process of a therapy session. It will not be appropriate for the interviewer to offer the interventions or support that typically would be available in a therapy session and so, if this is required, you will be directed to a more appropriate service/source.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Your identity will be protected at all times and any information you share will be treated in confidence by the researcher. However, in keeping with The British Psychological Society’s Code of Human Research Ethics guidelines (2014), should

there be an evident risk of harm to yourself or another, confidentiality may be overridden in order to inform an appropriate person with a position of clinical responsibility.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and wish to discuss these in order to make a final decision about participating in this study, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Many thanks,
Tamara

Investigator

Name: Tamara Vaughan
Programme of Study: Counselling Psychology Doctorate
Address: Department of Psychology,
University of Roehampton,
Whitelands College,
Holybourne Avenue,
London SW15 4JD
Email: vaughant@roehampton.ac.uk

Director of Studies

Name: Dr. Paul Dickerson
Department of Psychology,
University of Roehampton,
Whitelands College,
Holybourne Avenue,
London SW15 4JD
Email: p.dickerson@roehampton.ac.uk

References:

Agllias, K. (2011). No longer on speaking terms: The losses associated with family estrangement at the end of life. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 92, 107-113.

The British Psychological Society (2014). *Code of human research ethics*. Leicester: BPS. Retrieved from http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/General/code_of_human_research_ethics_oct_2014.pdf



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: A narrative investigation of adult estrangement.

Brief Description of Research Project, and What Participation Involves:

I am interested in exploring the experience of adult estrangement. To do so, I will interview 10 individuals for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, asking questions about their experience of estrangement and the impact (if any) it has had. Interviews will take place either at The Priory Hospital Roehampton, The University of Roehampton or in the participant's home and will be audio recorded.

Researcher's Name: Tamara Vaughan

Department: Psychology

University Address: University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue, London

Postcode: SW15 4JD

Email: vaughant@roehampton.ac.uk

Consent Statements:

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet.
- I agree to voluntarily participate in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point, without giving a reason, by providing my participant ID number (see debrief), although if I do so, I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form.
- I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the researcher and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.
- Data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University of Roehampton's Data Protection Policy.
- I understand that data may be used in academic/research articles and conferences and in additional publications arising from this research.

- I also understand that if I disclose a desire to harm myself or another, in accordance with the The British Psychological Society's research guidelines, the researcher may need to inform an appropriate individual with clinical responsibility to ensure that I receive further support.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.) However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

If your recruitment took place via Stand Alone, please note that the organisation will not have access to your raw data however, they may access the collated results of the study in the form of a summarised report.

Director of Studies:

Name: Dr. Paul Dickerson

Department of Psychology,

University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue,

London SW15 4JD

Email Address:

p.dickerson@roehampton.ac.uk

Head of Department:

Name: Dr. Diane Bray

Department of Psychology,

University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue,

London SW15 4JD

Email Address:

d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Demographics Questionnaire

Participant Demographics:

- (i) Age:
- (ii) DOB:
- (iii) Gender:
- (iv) Nationality:
- (v) Ethnicity:
- (vi) Nuclear Family makeup (members):
- (vii) Estranged from:
- (viii) Length of estrangement(s):
- (ix) Current status of estrangement:
- (x) If not reconciled, would you consider reconciliation in the future:



Participant ID No.:

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF FORM

Title of Research Project: A narrative investigation of adult estrangement.

This study was designed to explore experiences of adult estrangement, a concept which, according to Agllias (2011, pg. 107) is the “*distancing and loss of affection between family members*”. Though thought to be widespread, estrangement is still understudied and as a result, a limited understanding of this experience persists. This study was designed to aim to explore various facets of the experience of estrangement through the way that people speak about their estrangement. The research question is: “how do adults construct experiences of estrangement”.

References:

Agllias, K. (2011). No longer on speaking terms: The losses associated with family estrangement at the end of life. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 92, 107-113.

The researcher wishes to extend her sincerest thanks to you for participating in this study and hopes that you have found it a worthwhile experience.

All interview data will be securely stored. You can withdraw from this study at any stage, without needing to justify your decision. In order to do this, please contact the investigator, providing your participant number (see header of this form).

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies). However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

If you feel troubled or worried about any issues that may have been raised during the interview, you may find it helpful to contact one of the following organisations which may be able to offer you further support:

British Psychological Society (BPS): <http://www.bps.org.uk/bpslegacy/dcp>

Karma Nirvana (for victims of forced marriages and honour based abuse):
www.karmanirvana.org.uk or 08005999247

SANE: www.sane.org.uk or 0300 304 7000

Stand Alone: www.standalone.org.uk

Support Line: www.supportline.org.uk or 01708 765200

The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC):
<http://napac.org.uk> or 0808 801 0331

The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org or 08457 90 90 90

Investigator's Name and Contact details:

Name: Tamara Vaughan

Programme of Study: Counselling Psychology Doctorate

Address: Department of Psychology,

University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue,

London SW15 4JD

Email: vaughant@roehampton.ac.uk

Director of Studies

Name: Dr. Paul Dickerson

Department of Psychology,

University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue,

London SW15 4JD

Email Address:

p.dickerson@roehampton.ac.uk

Head of Psychology

Name: Dr. Diane Bray

Department of Psychology

University of Roehampton,

Whitelands College,

Holybourne Avenue,

London SW15 4JD

Email Address:

d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk